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EDITORIAL

GDANSK IN SIBERIA?

The Soviet workers have spectacularly re-entered the political stage. On July 10 the coal miners of Mezhdurechensk went on strike with a series of demands ranging from a more plentiful supply of consumer goods to greater autonomy in the management of their affairs. The strike spread to fifteen mining towns, paralyzing the entire Kuznetsk Basin in western Siberia. By then the strikers, having raised political demands, wanted to talk with somebody higher up: Nikolai Ryzhkov, the Prime Minister.

In some respects, this strike is reminiscent of the celebrated Polish stoppage of nine years ago. Like the Poles, the Soviet strikers have the full backing of the local population. They, too, have added to their soap-and-sausage demands a series of political postulates, attacking privilege and asking for local party elections and speedy constitutional changes recognizing the full right to strike. As at Gdansk, the strike committee has taken care to preserve discipline.

But there is a basic difference. Unlike the case of Poland, the Communist Party and the press have so far greeted the strike with a degree of sympathy. *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, the usually conservative daily, went as far as to suggest that *perestroika* has been hitherto "a revolution from above, but now they are lending it a hand from below." It is too early to say how far the strike, now spreading to the Donets Basin in the Ukraine, will go, what echo it will have throughout the working class and what the official reaction will be. But one thing is already obvious. The Soviet intelligentsia, which viewed the labor movement with contempt and tended to treat *perestroika* as its private preserve, will have to revise its judgment. The workers want to be actors in their own drama. Seventy-two years after the Revolution, they may well again become the mainspring of Soviet history.

STALIN'S VICTIMS
Paul Robeson Jr.
Robert Conquest
Alexander Cockburn

SANDRA'S DAY
Herman Schwartz

YELLOWSTONE COMES BACK
Wilbur Wood

STARK CHOICE IN SALVADOR
Frank Smyth

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Philip Green

OUR TELEVISION POLITBURO

CUE THE GREEN GOD, TED

GORE VIDAL

There has not been a political debate in the United States since the one that ended with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. From September 1939 to December 7, 1941, the ruling class of the United States was split between those who would join the Allies in their war against Hitler and those who would stay out. For three years there was fierce argument in Congress, the press, the schools. At my school, Exeter, there was a sharp division between the isolationists, known as America Firsters, and the interventionists. True to the populist tradition in which I was brought up, I was isolationist. Then, or as Lincoln once so bleakly put it, *and the war came*; and I enlisted in the Army, age 17.

Since the victory of 1945, the United States, as befits the leader of something called "the free world," has fought open and unsuccessful wars in Korea and Vietnam; and relatively covert wars in Cambodia, Laos, the Caribbean, Central America, Africa, Chile, the Middle East, etc. In almost every case, our overwhelming commitment to freedom, democracy and human rights has required us to support those regimes that would deny freedom, democracy and human rights to their own people. We justify our affection for fascist (or, to be cozy, authoritarian) regimes because each and every one of them is a misty-eyed convert to our national religion, which is anticommunism. Then, once our dictator is in place, we echo Andy Hardy: Hey, kids, let's put on an election! And so, in the presence of cold-eyed avatars of

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EXCHANGE.

Stalin's Victims

BEDEVILED NUMBERS

Brooklyn

In its backhanded defense of Stalinism, Alexander Cockburn's March 6 "Beat the Devil" column resorted to a questionable brand of journalism. Cockburn began by misrepresenting Soviet historian Roy Medvedev, against whom the column directs its main criticism: "At the start of February the tabloid *Argumenti i Fakti* reported that the historian Roy Medvedev had proposed that Stalin's victims amounted to some 20 million."

This statement is both inaccurate and misleading. Medvedev wrote a response to a reader's request for an accurate total of those repressed by Stalin (*Argumenti i Fakti*, February 4-10, 1989) in which he said: "This is a difficult question and cannot be answered accurately. . . . Stalinism concealed its crimes. No one conducted an accurate count of those who were shot, deported or killed by hunger." Medvedev then referred to official statistics as the basis for his rough estimates for the period from January 1, 1927, to January 1, 1953. He cited a total of 40 million people *affected in some way* by repression, including 9 million to 10 million deaths.

Next, Cockburn relied on American demographer Frank Lorimer's pathbreaking work *The Population of the Soviet Union* (Geneva, 1946) as his chief authority for supporting a low estimate of 5 million excess Soviet deaths between the December 1926 and January 1939 censuses: "'Excess' deaths—that is, in Lorimer's case, a comparison of the reported total population in 1939 with the expected population at that date . . . amounted to somewhere between 4.5 million and 5 million."

This assertion grossly misinterpreted what Lorimer actually wrote. His estimate of the expected 1939 population is 191 million. Since the reported 1939 population is 170.5 million, the difference between the two figures is 20.5 million. This is the "*population deficit*," not the number of "excess deaths." Since the expected number of births would have exceeded the actual number by about 10 million, the excess deaths are found by subtracting the 10 million births that never occurred from the population deficit. The result is 10.5 million excess deaths, or double the number that Cockburn incorrectly attributes to Lorimer.

Lorimer's figure of 5 million was his estimate of *famine deaths* in 1932-33. He calculated these by comparing the official 1934 population with the 1934 population obtained by assuming that the 1929-30 birth and death rates remained unchanged in 1931-33. The difference between Lorimer's estimate of 5 million and Medvedev's estimate of 6 million to 7 million is due to a large number of emigrants (Ukrainians, Poles, Byelorussians, Kazakhs and Siberian Cossacks) who were not counted in the 1937 census.

Nowhere in Cockburn's column is there any mention of the fact that several Soviet demographers and historians have speculated that the official 1939 census was significantly inflated (Mark Tolts, *Ogonyok*, No. 51, 1987, pp. 10-11; V.P. Danilov, *Voprosy Istorii*, No. 3, 1988, pp. 116-121). This conjecture can be substantiated by using published official data to obtain the official population sizes of 198 million and 173 million at the beginning and end of the war period (July 1, 1941, to January 1, 1946). The difference between these two numbers represents a huge population loss of 25 million. Since for normal death rates the population would have increased by 9 million for the actual number of births, the number of excess wartime deaths would have been about 25 million plus 9 million, or 34 million.

This is a prohibitively high figure, which contradicts recent Soviet estimates of 27 million and implies that the official prewar population (i.e., the 1939 census figure) was inflated by roughly 7 million. Taking account of the fewer births that would have occurred due to the smaller population, the number of excess deaths covered up by this inflation would be 6.1 million. Adding this to Lorimer's estimate of 10.5 million, we arrive at a possible total of 16.6 million excess deaths.

Finally, Cockburn ignores the many additional excess deaths caused by Stalin between January 1, 1939, and his death in March 1953. I estimate this figure to be approximately 10 million: This includes those who died in mass executions without trial at secret killing grounds in 1939-41; the victims from the Western territories annexed in 1939-40 who died during mass deportations; the deaths from Stalinist repression during the war, which were concealed among the huge number of wartime deaths, including the many who perished during the wartime deportation of 5 million people, constituting entire small nations; and the multitudes who died each year in the labor camps.

Thus, it appears that it is Cockburn, rather than Medvedev, who "performs . . . injury to history" and does "disservice . . . to truth." More important, however, is the fact that the scale and systematic nature of Stalin's genocide warrant the comparison of Stalinism with Nazism. Hitler and Stalin were similar in important ways, and Stalinism still nourishes the roots of Russian fascism.

Paul Robeson Jr.

NUMEROKLATURA

Stanford, Calif.

Alexander Cockburn's piece on the casualties of Stalinism suggests that a figure of circa 20 million deaths is only put forward by cold warriors like me or factious Russians like Roy Medvedev (though I am not clear how he fits Stephen Cohen with this pattern).

I think it a little odd that Cockburn, surely a great getter-into-papers, should condemn Medvedev as one who "will do anything to get into the papers," if we consider that for twenty years this courageous figure was unable to publish a single word in his own country. When Cockburn has voluntarily abstained for a like period, at least on subjects about which he is imperfectly informed, we may begin to accept his *locus standi*.

Medvedev's figures, of about 40 million repressed and about half of them dying, are by no means the lone view of an eccentric. Figures identical with or consonant with his have appeared in all sorts of periodicals, and from a range of established academic and other pens—in the government's *Nedelya*, in *Literaturnaya Gazeta* (organ of the Soviet Union of Writers), in the party's own *Agitator*, and a dozen others: that 17 million to 19 million went to the gulag; that at least 1 million were shot in 1937-38; that the arrests over those two years were circa 7 million; that 20 million to 25 million were "dead or half dead" in 1930-33; and indeed, his 20 million total dead.

But let me take a decisive example that Cockburn argues in detail, the kulak deportations. He says that high figures are due to confusion with peasants moving voluntarily to take part in industrialization. Kulaks—those destined to deportation—were in fact forbidden to move to the cities: Soviet figures of the time indicate that 20 to 25 percent of them nevertheless managed to do so.

Twenty to 25 percent of what figure? Stalin wrote in 1933 that 15 percent of precollectivization households—"kulak and better off"—now belonged to the past. That would mean circa 20 million peasants. So circa 15 million of them failed to escape and were forced from their homes. A figure of "over 15 million" so removed is given by not a crackpot journalist or dissident but one of the Soviet government's leading agricultural advisers, academician Tikhonov of the All-Union Academy of Agricultural Economic Science: He adds that 2 million of these were indeed "directed into industry," that is, in the new areas in the Urals and elsewhere, leaving 13 million-plus simply deported. (My own estimate, in *The Harvest of Sorrow*, was 10 million to 12 million.)

As to Cockburn's handful of Western names, they sound impressive but carry little weight. Some have reasonable reputations—

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EDITORIALS.

Economy Tour

Two hundred years ago Marie Antoinette said of her starving subjects, "Let them eat cake." With George Bush in Warsaw, a senior American official declared that Poland's future lay with enterprises like fast-food chains: "Let them eat at McDonald's" is the U.S. answer to the economic crisis in Eastern Europe.

Bush could not promise the Hungarians and the Poles anything but derisively small amounts of money, although he did undertake to see if his friends had some marks or yen to spare. He was unreserved in his insistence that only capitalism brings salvation. To be sure, he did not mention the $532 billion the United States owes its creditors, or our declining standard of living and social pathologies. Capitalism and democracy, he declared, are inseparable. He called for free elections in Eastern Europe but was silent about the 50 percent of U.S. voters who do not vote and the domination of U.S. politics by corporate money.

Bush's pronouncements were, then, ideologically and politically vacuous. His subordinates, however, delivered a message that was entirely clear. Poland was instructed to submit itself to the standard regimen of the International

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Monetary Fund—austerity for the people, profits for the banks. Hungary was told that it can have normal relations with the United States if it dismantles the last vestiges of socialism. Democratization, for the Bush government, is rhetorically important but actually far less interesting than the chance to penetrate other countries economically, or to use them geopolitically against Gorbachev.

The President's performance in Eastern Europe reflected the incoherence and weakness of U.S. policy. A military superpower, we are economically a nation at great risk. We call for disengagement and liberalization in Eastern Europe but are unprepared to pay the price for it: withdrawal from West Germany.

The initiative in world politics, clearly, has passed from U.S. hands. Even the argument about the French Revolution between Margaret Thatcher and French Prime Minister Michel Rocard emphasized the point. Rocard's criticism of Thatcher's "social cruelty" was a reminder that the U.S. model of limited citizenship, a democracy of avarice, inspires almost no one. *The New York Times* described Bush in Europe as a "tourist." The problem, however, is not that our government is led by gawking provincials. Rather, it is dominated by prisoners of the past—Bourbons in pinstripes.

Time Check

The morning of April 15, the West Bank and Gaza went on "Palestinian time." At the prompting of the *intifada*'s leadership, Palestinians set their clocks forward one hour to mark summertime in the state of Palestine. In a spontaneous reaction, Israeli troops roved about smashing watches with clubs and beating people for telling them the "wrong" time. Traditionally, Israelis fight with one another over when to start daylight-saving time; one year, some secular towns unilaterally moved their clocks forward to protest stalling tactics by Orthodox Jewish leaders. This year, the Palestinians won: The government simply told all Israelis to advance their clocks.

But the Palestinians' hour has not yet come. Although the two sides have been negotiating quietly for several months, with the United States as intermediary, as Edward Said pointed out recently in these pages [see "Sanctum of the Strong," July 10] the Israelis succeeded in diverting international attention with their elections proposal. And now the so-called peace process is moving according to Shamir time, as if the Palestinian nation did not exist at all. The Likud Party's adoption July 5 of a set of conditions designed by hard-liner Ariel Sharon to kill the elections plan drew only a grimace from Washington.

Indeed, the extreme right is in the ascendancy in Israel. Emboldened, no doubt, by the American acquiescence to his triumph within Likud, Sharon has repeated his call for the assassination of Yasir Arafat. In recent months, Jewish settlers have thrown off all restraint, killing at least eight Palestinians and effectively joining the army in what Israeli writer Amos Oz recently called "sadism, pogromism, blind vengeance and undiscriminating slaughter." The homes of left-wing Israeli legislators and journalists have been firebombed. And the lack of progress in the U.S.-P.L.O. dialogue has led to calls by the *intifada*'s leadership for armed attacks on Israeli soldiers—so far wisely spurned by the P.L.O.—and to random reprisals by frustrated Palestinians. With Shamir's elections stillborn, an international conference based on a two-state solution and security guarantees for both nations is the only hope. The real time in Israel/Palestine is one minute to midnight.

Sandra's Day

Amid all the emotions aroused by *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, the obvious is being ignored: It takes five Justices to make a majority, and there were not five who could agree on a single significant change in the law of abortion. All public officials, especially judges, are thus still constitutionally obligated to avoid or annul any restrictions barred by *Roe v. Wade* and the rulings applying it.

This is not to say there is no cause for alarm. There was no reaffirmation of *Roe* in anything that five Justices wrote, and a great deal of hostility—not unexpected, but still ominous. And some Missouri regulations were upheld [see Rachael Pine, "*Roe* on the Brink," July 24/31].

But it is dangerous to accentuate the negative. Many judges, legislators, administrators and others who determine how our present law operates may be led by the apocalyptic rhetoric to assume that significant cutbacks in abortion rights have already been made, or are so imminent and certain that they can or should start acting accordingly. Doomsday prophesies can be self-fulfilling, and such prophecies are not justified by *Webster*.

For what did the Court—not a plurality of three or a combination of four—actually hold? It voted, first, that it would not even consider the constitutionality of the announcement in Missouri's statutory preamble that "life begins at conception," because the possible effects of such an announcement on a woman's right to an abortion or to practice contraception were too hypothetical for a court to deal with—a reasonable finding.

Next, the Court held that the state can prevent public facilities and employees from performing abortions. Though this is a very troublesome ruling that makes it even harder for poor women to get abortions, it is in fact a logical implication of earlier decisions that a state need not pay for abortions; Justice Lewis Powell Jr., an abortion rights supporter, would probably have come out the same way.

There was no majority, however, for Missouri's effort to ban abortions in any private facility with merely a connection to the state such as a sewer or water line. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor noted the constitutional problems with such a sweeping ban, and left it—like almost everything else of consequence—for another day. And all the Justices agreed that they need not rule on Missouri's law governing counseling by public employees.

Apart from these matters, five Justices managed to agree

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on only one, relatively minor, disputed issue: Missouri may direct doctors to test whether a fetus could live outside the womb—be "viable"—after twenty weeks, but only if such tests are medically prudent. This ruling is not of great legal or practical significance, since the ultimate decision remains with the doctor. Even that issue, however, revealed deep differences among the five.

What a majority of the Court did not do, despite a clear opportunity, was to give a green light, either explicitly or by implication, to public officials to ignore *Roe v. Wade* and to take action previously barred by that decision.

Not that four of the Justices did not want to do that. Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Justices Anthony Kennedy and Byron White are obviously aching to overturn many of the precedents that have forbidden the states to impose crippling restrictions on the right to an abortion. Accordingly, they called for abandoning the *Roe* trimester structure, whereby judicial concern for any state interest in fetal life is limited to the third trimester, after the fetus is viable, insisting instead that such interest deserves attention from the beginning of the pregnancy. And Justice Antonin Scalia, who would overrule *Roe* totally and immediately, would surely support these positions even though he considers them pusillanimous half-measures.

But four votes don't normally make a majority. Until a true majority of the Court votes to affirm a particular restriction, a public official, having sworn to uphold the Constitution, disregards his or her oath if he or she does or proposes anything inconsistent with the Court's precedents, such as the plan of certain Louisiana politicians to revive the state's 1880s law criminalizing abortion.

And when such actions and proposals are challenged, it will be the duty of the state and lower Federal courts to follow the existing precedents and to strike down those measures, regardless of what they or commentators think is likely to happen. Judges should not be swayed by all the lamentations from one side and cheers from the other. As Justice Harry Blackmun wrote, there was not a "single, even incremental change in the law of abortion," and it is not for lower Federal or state judges to anticipate future overrulings, even if they expect such reversals. Apart from its impropriety, that kind of anticipation is notoriously unreliable, as the Court demonstrated this year when it unanimously reaffirmed the 1976 *Runyon v. McCrary* civil rights decision after indications that a majority was inclined to overturn it.

Paradoxically, the future of some of these precedents may be brighter after *Webster* than before. Prior to the decision, the odds were strong that *Roe* would be virtually overruled, if not formally then in effect. Although it is likely that the scope of protection under *Roe* will be cut back to some extent, when and in what respects are now quite unpredictable.

This uncertainty arises because Justice O'Connor holds the key vote at this time, and there are mysterious silences in her *Webster* opinion. In prior statements, she had harshly criticized the trimester structure as inherently unstable, "on a collision course with itself." Many expected that she would seize the first available opportunity to strike it down.

In *Webster*, however, she surprisingly passed up a very clear chance to do so. Instead, she figured out a way to avoid considering the trimester system at all, commenting briefly and only in passing that she still considered it "problematic." This is hardly a scathing comment, and a much milder epithet than she has used in the past. And drawing the almost petulant ire of Justice Scalia, she not only refused to take the opportunity offered by the case to "reconsider" *Roe* but seemed to put off such consideration until "the constitutional invalidity of a State's abortion statute actually turns on the constitutional validity of *Roe*." Whatever that means, it is not at all clear that the issues the Court has agreed to consider next year—mandatory notice to parents of a minor's intent to have an abortion, and requirements for operating a clinic—meet that test, although the resolution of these issues will of course be very important to women seeking an abortion. Indeed, those decisions could produce some rather confusing results.

Justice O'Connor also did not take the opportunity offered by the case to grant state and local governments broad authority to restrict abortions; nor did she invite them to try. Many had expected her to do so because of her prior opinions and well-known sympathy for States' rights. There was thus no invitation by the *Court* to tamper with *Roe*, as many have said—only by three and perhaps four Justices.

One reason for Justice O'Connor's restraint may be that she has based much of her criticism of *Roe* on her expectation that the point of fetal viability would recede with advances in medical technology. It now appears that fetal viability is not anatomically possible before twenty-three or twenty-four weeks, and this may have forced her to reexamine her entire position. It certainly seems to have induced her to want more time to think about the problem. How the Court's only female Justice will come out now seems more uncertain than it did before.

"For today, at least, the law of abortion stands undisturbed," concluded Justice Blackmun in his otherwise unhappy dissent. Restrictions held unconstitutional before *Webster* remain unconstitutional. Many state legislatures will ignore this, but women need not, and judges may not.

HERMAN SCHWARTZ

Herman Schwartz, a contributing editor of The Nation, *is author of* Packing the Courts *(Scribner's).*

STAFF NOTES

Executive editor Richard Lingeman has returned from a leave of absence spent working on the second volume of his biography of Theodore Dreiser. His replacement, Richard Pollak, starts a new home and a new book in the Berkshires of Massachusetts. Pollak will maintain his ties to us as an editor at large, as will Katrina vanden Heuvel, who is vacating the post of assistant editor. Her first project will be editing an anthology of 125 years of *The Nation.*

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BELTWAY BANDITS.

DAVID CORN AND JEFFERSON MORLEY

■ Old Dog, Old Tricks

Only a year ago Norman Ornstein, the political analyst to whom Washington journalists run whenever they need a quote, awarded Senator Alfonse D'Amato a seal of approval: "We've been seeing an interesting evolution with Al D'Amato. He's moved up in the Senate; he's gained stature; he's become a lot sharper and more sophisticated." *The New York Times* put it more plainly: "New York's junior Senator has indeed come some distance from the political machine in which he started." But Ornstein and the paper of record were a bit hasty in their approval of D'Amato, who hails from the primordial ooze of Long Island Republican politics. The Senator has been linked to three of the many scandals that have hit the Department of Housing and Urban Development. He lobbied HUD for funds for a housing program in Puerto Rico that benefited businessmen who had contributed to his campaign. He used his influence to win a $1 million HUD grant for a swimming pool in his hometown of Island Park. And his cronies on the Island were able to grab up federally subsidized homes in a HUD program designed to help low-income residents. The greatly exaggerated reports of his rehabilitation show just how eager respectable pundits are to dispense forgiveness to tainted powerholders and welcome them into their midst.

■ He's No Jesse Jackson

Also happy to receive the dregs of politics at his table is Democratic National Committee chair Ron Brown. No sooner had George Bush proposed to eliminate political action committees supported by special interests than Brown leapt to their defense. "You eliminate PACs, you eliminate the opportunity of a lot of small donors to contribute effectively to a campaign," he huffed. Put another way, the Democratic majority out-PACs Republicans ($98.6 million to $60.7 million since 1981) and has no interest in changing a profitable system, even if it stinks. Brown's response is more in keeping with his role as a corporate attorney for the tony firm of Patton, Boggs and Blow (with which he has been associated for eight years) than as convention manager for Jesse Jackson.

The Bush program is hardly nonpartisan. It contains several laudable proposals—such as banning the rollover of campaign funds from one election cycle to the next and reducing the use of the Congressional mailing privilege—but a chief provision, encouraging political parties to spend more on Congressional elections, is clearly designed to help the well-heeled G.O.P. The scheme also excludes the two most necessary reforms, public financing of elections and campaign spending limits.

Few in Washington buy Brown's line that corporate, trade association and union PACs enhance democratic participation. In a year of assorted sleaze, the Democrats could be out front fighting for a cleaner system. But Brown would rather forget that during the 1970s the Democrats were the party of reform. Rediscovering that heritage would be bad for business.

■ Bush and Dingell: Joined at the Tailpipe

As with campaign finance reform, the Democrats should be trouncing the G.O.P. on the environment. Bush grabbed headlines in June when he unveiled his clean-air package, though his proposals fell far short of what is needed. A much tougher approach to air pollution can be found in three bills being guided through Congress by Representative Henry Waxman, the Democrat who chairs the subcommittee on health and the environment. The bills, which cover smog, acid rain and airborne toxins, leave Bush's proposals in the dust. Take toxic emissions. Each year 2.7 billion pounds of pollutants spout into the air from various facilities. Some of those chemicals have been linked with cancer and other diseases. Bush's measure would not require all toxic emitters to install controls; Waxman's would. Bush's plan to reduce smog-causing tailpipe emissions also compares shamefully with Waxman's bill. Bush calls for reducing nitrogen oxide emissions from 1 gram per mile to 0.70 g.p.m. Waxman wants to set the standard at 0.40 g.p.m. by 1993 and 0.20 by 2000. Since 65 percent of all 1988 cars already meet the 0.40 g.p.m. level, Bush's measure would do little to force Detroit to make cleaner cars.

Waxman's biggest obstacle is not Bush but Representative John Dingell, chair of the Energy and Commerce Committee. Dingell, a Democrat from the Detroit area, is practiced at nixing clean-air legislation, especially bills that put pressure on auto makers. He has embraced the Bush plan. Even before Bush produced the legislation, Dingell offered to introduce it and was rounding up co-sponsors. If Democrats want to show they can do better than Bush, they will have to make it past one of their own leaders.

■ Can You Repeat That, Senator?

One forgetful and overly forgiving Democrat is Senate majority leader George Mitchell. After the Senate Intelligence Committee's recent discovery of a heretofore unexamined file of memorandums relating to quid pro quo *contra* aid deals, Mitchell and the committee decided not to look at the file's contents. The committee had been attempting to learn why key White House memos had not been turned over to the Iran/*contra* committees. There really was no need to reopen the Iran/*contra* investigation, explained Mitchell, who had sat on the Senate Iran/*contra* committee. More pressing matters were at hand. Following the Supreme Court's flag-burning decision, Mitchell led the pack crying for a ban on flag desecration. He obviously did not recall how he had once somberly lectured Oliver North on civics and tolerance:

> In America, disagreement with the policies of government is not evidence of a lack of patriotism. I want to repeat that. In America, disagreement with the policies of the government is not evidence of lack of patriotism. Indeed, it's the very fact that Americans can criticize their government openly and without fear of reprisal that is the essence of our freedom and that will keep us free.

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

In a column published in this space earlier this year [see "Minority Report," January 30], I made a glancing reference to the Nazi past of Yitzhak Shamir. This brought me a prodigious mailbag, with inquiries from people who didn't believe it and people who couldn't believe it, as well as from readers who wanted to know more.

The chief organization on the right wing of the Zionist movement under the British mandate was the Irgun Zvai Leumi, which based itself on the ideas of Zev Jabotinsky. Jabotinsky was a relative moderate in that he acknowledged an admiration for Italian Fascism rather than Nazism and nurtured the territorial aspiration only for "both sides of the River Jordan." At the outbreak of war between Britain and Nazi Germany, he agreed to suspend military operations against the British and was even prepared to cooperate with them as a last resort against the common enemy. This was too much for Avraham Stern, who broke with Jabotinsky over the question and founded the Stern Gang, later known as LEHI (a Hebrew acronym for Fighters for the Freedom of Israel), calling for a state that extended from the Nile to the Euphrates and proposing an alliance with Hitler to bring this about. One of his most loyal deputies, and successor as leader of the group, was Yitzhak Yezernitzky, now known as Yitzhak Shamir.

Stern began to put out feelers to the Axis in the fall of 1940, at a time when most of continental Europe was under the swastika, and Britain was resisting the Nazis alone. In September of that year Stern met with one of Mussolini's agents in Jerusalem, but the discussions proved inconclusive. In January he dispatched an agent named Naftali Lubentschik to meet with two of Hitler's emissaries in Beirut, then under Vichy control. One of them, Otto von Hentig, was chief of the Oriental Department of the Nazi Foreign Office. Stern's proposal, which was rashly put in writing, began by establishing its ideological common ground with Nazism, expressing sympathy with the Hitlerite goal of a Jew-free Europe and speaking of "the goodwill of the German Reich government and its authorities toward Zionist activity inside Germany and towards Zionist emigration plans." It then proposed the following:

> The establishment of the historical Jewish state on a national and totalitarian basis, and bound by a treaty with the German Reich, would be in the interest of a maintained and strengthened future German position of power in the Near East.
>
> Proceeding from these considerations, the NMO [i.e., the Stern Gang] in Palestine, under the condition [that] the above-mentioned national aspirations of the Israeli freedom movement are recognized on the side of the German Reich, offers to actively take part in the war on Germany's side.

It is important to note here that the Stern-LEHI approach was not based, like that of some Indian nationalists, simply on a rejection of Britain as the colonial enemy. The proposal clearly affirmed that the Stern Gang was "closely related to the totalitarian movements of Europe in its ideology and structure." Danny Rubinstein, a well-known Israeli journalist, comments that the group's members would respond favorably, and publicly, to news of Nazi military victories. As 1941 wore on and the Nazis struck eastward, this policy was enough to sicken some of Stern's lieutenants. But Shamir did not leave the organization, and after the British killed Stern in a shootout he became its leader.

Let me give some citations for the curious or the incredulous. Two articles by Professor Israel Shahak in *Middle East International*, for October 10, 1986, and November 18, 1988, supply much useful background, especially on the ideological aspect. Lenni Brenner's book *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* describes the German documentation of the meeting. In an interview in *Yediot Aharonot* on July 18, 1986, Professor Yeshayahu Leibovitz, former editor of the *Encyclopaedia Hebraica*, said, "Within three months we will have a Prime Minister who was a leader in an organization which offered its services to Hitler." He compared Shamir and Stern unfavorably with Kurt Waldheim, saying that Waldheim at least was mustered into Hitler's army, while LEHI volunteered.

Shamir has never renounced his political past, and he keeps up many of his old associations. After the war LEHI members murdered Count Folke Bernadotte, the United Nations' mediator in Palestine, who had earlier played an exemplary role in rescuing the Jews of occupied Hungary from Hitler's Final Solution. This act, too, is still justified by LEHI veterans.

Like a number of important facts about the Israeli-Palestinian drama, this aspect of Prime Minister Shamir's political evolution is well known in Israel but somehow occluded in the United States, where even liberal Zionists think nothing of accusing their critics of sympathy for Nazism if they dare to impugn the Holy State. Meanwhile, as was long ago foreseen by derided individuals such as Israel Shahak, there is a sinister fusion between the religious and nationalist right in Israel. Those who wish to force theocracy on the Jews, defining even their nationality by Orthodoxy, are making common cause with those who wish to force expulsion on the Arabs. In this gruesome enterprise, the spirit of Avraham Stern—whose manifestoes called for the building of the Third Temple—lives on. It lives on, too, in Shamir's call for the collective punishment of the village of Beita after a Jewish settler child was killed by a Jewish settler vigilante. It lives on in the negation of the human and national rights of the Palestinians, a negation Shamir has fiercely supported all his life. And it lives on in Likud's anthem, which still calls for both sides of the River Jordan, if not the land between the Nile and the Euphrates. When will a single reporter challenge Shamir to renounce this "covenant"?

There were many hurt and surprised squeals last month when Shamir collapsed gratefully back into the arms of the racist, rejectionist right. But he was only continuing a long and ignoble tradition, of which the State Department and *The New York Times* have no reason to be ignorant.

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BEAT THE DEVIL.

The Liberty Tree

The Supreme Being probably spared Robespierre and Saint-Just the pain of witnessing from on high the travesties of Jacobin ideals enacted in Paris. The festive aspects would not have distressed them. The Jacobins were fond of festivals. But the spectacle of all those economic royalists mustered behind their bulletproof glass on the Champs Élysées would have had the sans-culottes bellowing for the Committee of Public Safety to summon the tumbrils.

Robespierre and Saint-Just would have been more in sympathy with the celebrations undertaken 6,000 miles to the west, in Nicaragua, whose revolution ten years ago ultimately derived its inspiration from the French Revolution—not so much of 1789 but of '93 and '94, the triumphant years of the Jacobins.

Reading a passage from Tomás Borge's *La Paciente Impaciencia*, I remembered Robespierre's great speech on revolutionary democracy, made on February 5, 1793:

> It is time to mark clearly the aim of the Revolution. We wish an order of things . . . where distinctions arise only from equality itself; . . . where industry is an adornment to the liberty that ennobles it, and commerce the source of public wealth, not simply of monstrous riches for a few families. . . . We wish to substitute in our country morality for egotism, probity for a mere sense of honor, . . . the empire of reason for the tyranny of custom, . . . the charm of happiness for the tedium of pleasure, the grandeur of man for the triviality of grand society. . . . and in sealing our work with our blood may we ourselves see at least the dawn of universal felicity gleam before us! That is our ambition. That is our aim.

I take this translation from R.R. Palmer's excellent 1941 history *Twelve Who Ruled*. In his own work Borge was recalling the day he heard news of Che Guevara's death:

> Che is as irritating as Christ, as Quixote, as Bolívar, in as much as he mounted Rosinante, knocked down bishops and frontiers and was crucified on La Higuera; meanwhile, I thought of Velia wiping away my tears and hers.
>
> It is our obligation to rescue his thoughts, without writing marginal notes on his actions. . . . His sermon on the new man will be the ring of a bell, a fire. It is true, the development of consciousness will direct a new society. . . .
>
> Material stimulus exists, but it is a trifle compared with moral stimulus. Into our consciousness come midgets who deposit their basketsful of consumer appliances and salary hikes: thanks. Into our consciousness come giants with empty hands. They put a star in our palm and say: keep this forever.

Listening to George Bush speaking in Paris of democratic values is as awful as hearing Pope John Paul II speak of spiritual renewal even as he tries to crush the popular church, destroy Brazil's Cardinal Arns, throw Father Aristide to the Macoutes. May he burn in hell. And Bush? Let him undergo immediate transubstantiation, with intact memory of his previous high station, into the physical form of a peasant, known to be supportive of the revolution, working his land in Region V around the communities of Juigalpa and Cuapa, watching a band of *contras* come up the path. In Paris, amid the odes to the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man, someone should have read him recent excerpts from the Nicaraguan press:

Barricada, June 6, 1989

CHONTALES—Six-year-old Liliette Matus Lopez was killed by shrapnel from an M-79 grenade launched by a group of *contras* who attacked E.P.S. [government] troops . . . 17 kilometers northeast of La Libertad. . . . Another *contra* group kidnapped the peasants Pedro Torres Rocha and Ignacio Delgadillo Padilla in the area of Palmira. . . . The number of kidnapped civilians at this time has risen to 81. . . . Recent assassinations have wreaked havoc in the communities of Cuapa and Juigalpa, where on May 30 blood spilled by the *contras* brought much pain to the mothers of Chontales. On this day, while the mercenary group headed by "Paco" assassinated two *campesino* youths in the sector known as Los Cocos, . . . the *contra* group of "Colina" kidnapped seven youths, three of whom were found with their throats slit.

Barricada, June 14, 1989

JINOTEGA—*Campesinos* . . . in the north and northeast of this province announced that at least 400 *contras* have come across the Honduran border in order to obstruct their agricultural activities, pressure them to collaborate and threaten them with kidnapping if they don't. "They're very well armed, with new uniforms."

Nuevo Diario, June 20, 1989

ROACO—Over the weekend an undetermined number of counterrevolutionaries assassinated Leonidas Amado Sobalvarro Rodriguez and kidnapped Pina Espinoza and Alejandro Flores in the area of El Guapote.

The news wasn't all bad. On June 20 *Barricada* reported that the *contra* chieftain Colina, whose real name was Eduardo Espinoza Gonzalez, was killed in a skirmish a few miles north of Santo Domingo, in Chontales. He had been a member of the National Guard under Somoza, fleeing after the revolution. Colina had, according to the military chief of Region V, recently been fortified in his murderous rampages by a fresh influx of "humanitarian aid."

Under such attack almost from day one, the Nicaraguan revolution has lasted ten years, fired by ideals that have so far prevailed over scarcity so terrible that even Robespierre and Saint-Just, who knew the miseries and chaos of Paris in 1792, would have been impressed. They too knew a world in which there seemed few beacons of comfort, as the forces of the Grand Alliance and the *contras* of the Vendée and the eastern borders threatened to crush them. Every revolution fears its Thermidor, and many have known them. The Jacobins were swept away in 1794, and today the polite memorialists in Paris prefer to remember Mirabeau. Even Danton is too much for them. Let us turn our eyes from Paris and look to the west, to Nicaragua, and honor the star that Borge and his comrades clasp in their palms.

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

The Files of Counterrevolution

On the actual anniversary of the storming of the Bastille, as the *contras* roamed south of the Honduran border, the Senate Intelligence Committee charged the F.B.I. with having investigated the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador and other groups on the basis of "allegations that should not have been considered credible." The committee's 150-page report called on the F.B.I. to purge its files of the records of this investigation, which had scrutinized 2,370 individuals and 1,330 groups, displaying a pertinacity that would have impressed Joseph Fouché, the Jacobin (and later Napoleon's) police chief, who caused the words "Death is nothing but eternal sleep" to be posted at the gates of French cemeteries.

The New York Times calmly noted the senators' belief that the Bureau's inquiry had not "reflected significant political or ideological bias in the conduct of international terrorism investigations"; with similar detachment the *Los Angeles Times* said that "the report deemed the [Cispes] case an 'aberration.' " Aberration? Consider the following history, assembled by my colleague Tristan Reader.

Between 1981 and 1985 the F.B.I. undertook investigations of Cispes claiming that the group had been connected with terrorist activities in El Salvador. As details of this were uncovered in 1987, it became clear that the F.B.I. had been investigating 178 other groups critical of the Reagan Administration's policy toward Central America. (The Senate committee has so far issued only a nine-page summary of its report, which does not explain the basis for its numbers.) The targets of these spinoff operations included the Washington Office on Latin America, El Rescate, Fenestras and NACLA, as well as Oxfam, the A.C.L.U., the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference, Amnesty International, the National Lawyers Guild, the American Federation of Teachers, Filipino support groups, anti-Klan and antinuclear organizations. With these disclosures came public outcry, and in subsequent hearings the F.B.I. assured Congress that all the investigations had been stopped as of June 18, 1985.

But the files have not been sealed. Last summer Thea Lee, a graduate student and activist at the University of Michigan, put in an F.O.I.A. request for information on organizations in Ann Arbor. After months of delay she received a letter stating that the Detroit office of the F.B.I. had several references to the Latin American Solidarity Committee of Ann Arbor but that the documents were being "kept secret in the interest of national defense or foreign policy." The F.B.I. further admitted that it had a reference to the Coalition for Peace in Central America, an organization founded in October 1985, four months after the Cispes investigation was supposed to have ended. In Chicago a member of the local Cispes chapter who filed an F.O.I.A. request well after the F.B.I. formally ended its operation was denied information on the ground that it was part of an "ongoing investigation."

Alicia Fernandez of the Center for Constitutional Rights, which has been representing Cispes, says that the file on the Latin American Solidarity Committee does not appear to be part of the original Cispes investigation. The file on the Coalition for Peace could not possibly be part of it. Ross Gelbspan, a reporter for *The Boston Globe* who has reviewed F.O.I.A. documents in the course of writing a book on the F.B.I.'s war against Central America activists, has identified four other major investigations in this area. These have targeted individual critics of U.S. policy in Nicaragua, groups planning or conducting demonstrations against that policy, and such groups or individuals as might be connected with "Salvadoran Leftist Activities in the United States" or "Leftist Guerrilla Activities in El Salvador." Gelbspan says there is no sign that the investigations have been halted.

It is likely that once the Cispes investigation was uncovered, the F.B.I. simply gave different aspects of the investigation new names, thus making them difficult to locate through the F.O.I.A. procedure. The Center for Constitutional Rights has filed a lawsuit requesting that all the Cispes-related investigations, including the four identified by Gelbspan, be stopped, that the records be sealed and sent to the National Archives. But even if C.C.R. is successful, its action may not end this type of illegal investigation. Gelbspan is in possession of a February 15, 1985, F.B.I. document marked "do not file," indicating a secret network of information within the F.B.I. despite laws requiring government agencies to make known the existence of all records. (Also note the possibility of transferring domestic operations to foreign counterintelligence; see *The Nation*'s October 17, 1987, editorial "Has the F.B.I. Really Changed?")

By far the most horrible aspect of the F.B.I.'s "antiterrorist" campaign was its close cooperation, as disclosed by former F.B.I. employee Frank Varelli, with the Salvadoran National Guard, to whom it supplied the names of Salvadorans about to be deported from the United States. How many of these were, upon their return, arrested, tortured, then killed? The Senate report does not say.

'O Sun of '93 . . . '

"O sun of '93, when shall I see your light again?" cried the old English radical on his deathbed amid the darkness of reaction in the 1830s. Recently I read a striking passage in Isaac Deutscher's last lectures on the Soviet Union's "unfinished revolution," given in 1967. Deutscher remarked that when, in the eyes of the people, the miseries of revolution came to overshadow its grandeur, "the result was restoration," but restoration—tragic though it could be—"demonstrated to a people disillusioned with the revolution how inacceptable the reactionary alternative was. Returned Bourbons and Stuarts taught the people much better than Puritans, Jacobins, or Bonapartists could, that there was no way back to the past; that the basic work of the revolution was irreversible; and that it must be saved for the future." Anyone looking at Bush, Thatcher, Kohl, Mitterrand and the others lined up behind their plexiglass must surely understand the force of that remark.

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ARTICLES.

YELLOWSTONE COMES BACK

Political Fires Still Smolder

WILBUR WOOD

Yellowstone National Park

Classroom, laboratory, sanctuary, zoo: Whatever this wilderness was in the past, after the fires of 1988 it was also part moonscape. By this summer's end, some 2 million tourists will have driven between geyser basins and hiked back trails, seeing how flames blackened a half-million acres of this 2.2-million-acre park. But not to worry. As an extensive educational campaign—including roadside displays, museum exhibits and traveling lecturers—is at pains to inform us, the forests of Yellowstone will recover.

But even though tourism is up 9.2 percent over last year and the scorched earth is greening as predicted, the politics that flared with the flames are still smoldering—politics of the kind that forced National Park Service director William Penn Mott out of his job April 15. Senator Alan Simpson of Wyoming was just the loudest of Western members of Congress howling for Mott's hide after the fires exploded out of control and sent a pall of smoke from the Rockies almost to the Mississippi River.

When fires covered less than 17,000 acres in Yellowstone, Mott's superiors in the Interior Department officially set aside the sixteen-year-old park policy of allowing lightning-sparked blazes to burn themselves out. This policy had worked well since 1972. Few of these "natural" fires had grown beyond five or ten acres, the largest burning several hundred acres before being halted by rain or barriers like cliffs or rivers. Conventional wisdom held that the park's mosaic of mixed forests and meadows would not let fires spread catastrophically. But 1988's unrelentingly hot, dry and windy summer overwhelmed all conventional wisdom.

Simpson charged that Mott disobeyed his superiors and did not move aggressively to subdue the fires. "Too little, too late" were the words on many lips. "Too late" may be accurate in some cases: Early suppression might have helped quell the Clover-Mist fire in the northeast corner of the park, for example. But it hardly applies to the giant North Fork fire, which began with a woodcutter's cigarette in the Targhee National Forest and was immediately jumped on by forest managers operating in "full suppression" mode.

When the North Fork fire raged into Yellowstone, the Park Service tackled it right away too. There was some confusion over jurisdiction, and a few bulldozer drivers complained when they weren't allowed to carve firebreaks, but as chief park naturalist George Robinson said to me, What good is a ten-yard-wide scar when forty-mile-an-hour winds are blowing sparks and igniting dry forest a mile ahead of the fire front? And as for "too little," the $120 million poured into helicopters, airplanes, bulldozers, trucks, chain-saw fuel, chemical suppressant and meals, lodging and salaries for nearly 10,000 men and women adds up to the costliest firefighting effort in history. "Too late, and too much" may be closer to the truth. Only the rains and snows of autumn finally put down the fires.

For Simpson the fires appeared to offer a handy smoke-screen. He could blame Mott for them and dodge speaking about his deeper antipathy toward the director's support for reintroducing wolves into the Yellowstone ecosystem. Wolves had been exterminated in the park by the 1920s, and Mott sees bringing them back as a step toward natural regulation of the overabundant elk herds.

However, most ranchers (among them powerful supporters of Alan Simpson) do not believe that the depredations of the wolves will be restricted to elk and deer in Yellowstone. They say the wolves will travel and inevitably go for sheep and cattle. Of course, wolves do travel; they show the same disdain for property lines as bison, elk, bears, eagles, trout and pine bark beetles. But until wolves—whether introduced or on their own—do come back to Yellowstone, we won't know how much of a plague they'll be to ranchers.

The debate in Yellowstone centers on the concept of natural regulation—Mott did not initiate the policy of letting nature take its own course, but he espoused it with surprising success during the last years of the Reagan Administration. It is a path shining with good intentions and pitted with contradictions. Natural regulation to Mott or to a park biologist means allowing a large, complex ecological setting to take care of itself without human intervention.

From 1886 to 1972, the Park Service practiced full fire suppression in Yellowstone. Blazes from lightning strikes were treated the same as those from matches tossed out car windows. Thus, fire was not allowed to perform its function of renewing forest land. The resultant masses of closely spaced, insect-infested trees created an enormous supply of fuel awaiting a summer when lightning would come but no rain.

And as trees in Yellowstone remained unculled by fires, until last summer, so wild herds in the park also remained unculled. Until last winter. Before the snows, upward of 30,000 elk lived part or all of each year in the park, along with some 2,700 bison. By this spring's melt-off, however, some 2,400 elk and 540 bison had either starved or—after moving north out of the park—been killed in special hunts in Montana. Even these thinned populations represent an "unnatural" situation. Elk and bison, and the wolves that followed them, and grizzly bears too, were animals of the prairie a good part of the year. It is highly unlikely that before 1872, when Yellowstone was carved out of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, more than a few of these animals spent much time in what is now the park.

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And, of course, the lack of major predators is another "unnatural" element. An occasional mountain lion or grizzly will kill a crippled or weakened elk here and there, but this is not enough to establish a natural balance. Idaho Senator James McClure, who formerly stood with Simpson against reintroducing wolves, has suggested bringing in not ten mating pairs, as the Park Service proposes, but three. He would also allow ranchers to shoot wolves wandering outside Yellowstone.

The problem is, I am not convinced that three, or ten, or twenty pairs of wolves, by themselves, would cull elk and bison herds enough. And if bringing back wolves is a touchy subject, try suggesting bringing back human hunters—the most effective predator of all—to balance things in the park. Most of those favoring the reintroduction of wolves would be appalled at opening a hunting season in a national park. But are human beings any less "natural" than wolves?

Historically, the human inhabitants of the Yellowstone area were probably no less nomadic than wolves. The small bands we know of from early records were called "sheepeaters"—not "elkeaters," not "bisoneaters." This suggests that the chief ungulate species of prepark times was the now comparatively rare bighorn sheep.

Fires? Sheepeaters likely practiced what we now call "prescribed burning"—purposely setting fires to drive game or perhaps to create habitat for wildlife. Did they have a hand in the giant fires that researchers say raged here 200 and 300 years ago? Are fires set by prepark people "natural" and fires set by Park Service people "unnatural"?

I relish driving up to Yellowstone in the fall, when the tourists have thinned out and the big grazers have moved down from the back country into the open meadows and one can imagine a kind of North American Serengeti. So how many elk and bison do we want to keep in the park? The long-term issue is how to establish an effective predator-prey balance. As to the short-term problem—what to do about winter migrations out of the park—there are obvious options: First, let the animals starve (not a pleasant sight); second, hunt them (less heartless than watching them starve, but still unpalatable to many); third, feed them (and thus perpetuate overpopulation and the consequent overgrazing of summer range); or fourth, acquire more winter range (more "natural" than outright feeding with but similar consequences, and it still does not address the predator-prey imbalance).

At the moment, the last option is being pursued by an interagency team of national wildlife and park managers, Montana wildlife officials and private foundations, which plans to put together $6.7 million from public and perhaps private sources, in order to obtain access to nearly 18,000 acres of winter range. "We don't bill this as . . . the only solution," said Yellowstone park superintendent Robert Barbee, "but it does relieve the problem."

Relieving the other major problem—what to do about fires—could also run into millions of dollars, for Federal officials have decided to go back to the full suppression mode for the 1989 fire season. This will be the case in all national parks and forests until new fire-management plans are adopted for each area. It is not clear when, or if, the administrators of Yellowstone National Park will revert to natural regulation of its fires. When I talked to George Robinson last fall he was confident that in the end the "natural burn" policy would be vindicated, after factoring in additional guidelines that build on the experience of 1988 (mainly, accounting for the importance of weather).

On the other hand, Alston Chase, whose 1986 book *Playing God in Yellowstone* outlines many of the pitfalls of natural regulation, has advocated for all national parks and forests "aggressive programs of prescribed burning before more wildlands are engulfed by fire." My own feeling, after touring the park last fall, is that "aggressive" prescribed burning in the half of Yellowstone outside last summer's fire perimeters is not immediately necessary. Enough "culling" has been done, for now.

Back in 1963 a commission on our national parks headed by A. Starker Leopold issued a report that provided the basis for the policy of natural regulation: Our parks, it said, should be preserved as "vignettes of a primitive America." We now see that even so remote and wild a place as Yellowstone, with decades of fire suppression, with the elimination of major predators and with an annual influx of millions of tourists, cannot be a truly primitive "vignette." Not back in 1963, and certainly not now.

Slowly, the notion is gaining hold that park management cannot stop at park boundaries. However, a consensus on how to manage Yellowstone and the surrounding ecosystem—one that goes beyond muddling through crisis after crisis—is not in sight. Conservationists seek a "whole ecosystem" policy; loggers want to make sure they can still take timber out of national forests surrounding the park;

DRAWINGS BY RANDALL ENOS

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ranchers insist on being able to defend against wolves overrunning summer pastures; and snowmobilers and trail bikers sure would like to get a word in.

Many voices. How do we get them to stop talking only to themselves? Where is that quiet meadow where George Robinson and Alston Chase, Alan Simpson and William Penn Mott, can sit down and work through short-term political agendas toward a longer vision embracing the mystery and grandeur of this place? □

STARK CHOICE IN SALVADOR

Negotiations or Total War

FRANK SMYTH

Morazán, El Salvador

Compa, read the posted handwritten note, "Why did the insurrection not occur?" Many people at all levels of El Salvador's leftist guerrilla movement genuinely believed that they would be raising their flag over San Salvador by March of this year. But at a base in the rebel stronghold of Morazán province, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (F.M.L.N.) has begun to question its own views. This process of self-criticism and re-evaluation has been described by sympathetic Salvadoran political analysts as the rebels' Vatican II.

In short, both the leadership and the rank and file of the F.M.L.N. are weighing whether they can negotiate a compromise settlement with the government and still remain true to their revolutionary vision. Although this debate is more than five years old, never before in the history of the Salvadoran guerrilla movement has the concept of negotiations taken root so deeply. The reasons are both internal and external to El Salvador's nine-year-long civil war.

First, rebel leaders cannot but take into account the geopolitical realities of Central America. Like it or not, the Reagan Administration successfully demonstrated that the United States retains veto power in its backyard, and the Bush Administration is unlikely to depart radically from the old framework. Nicaragua, where most of the F.M.L.N. leadership has been living for the past year, has just marked the tenth anniversary of its revolution facing the worst economic crisis in its history. Regardless of the origins of that crisis, Salvadoran rebel leaders know that a second successful revolution in the region cannot afford to engage the wrath of the United States.

Second, the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev has voiced its opposition to a military victory by the Salvadoran rebels. Although its influence over the F.M.L.N. as an insurgency is marginal, it has nonetheless made it clear that a postrevolutionary El Salvador should expect much less than Nicaragua in the way of support. Again, the point is that a revolutionary El Salvador would face even narrower options than Nicaragua in trying to establish its independence from the United States.

Third, the F.M.L.N. has always perceived itself as being within a broad vein of Latin American nationalism. But on their nine-country tour of Latin America last fall, the two top Salvadoran rebel leaders, Leonel González and Joaquín Villalobos, received unexpected criticism from sympathetic countries such as Mexico, whose views they take seriously. The message from the continent was clear: Pursue negotiations rather than a victory on the battlefield.

Fourth, the F.M.L.N.'s attempt to achieve a military win by way of popular insurrection did not succeed. Certainly, insurrection has not been abandoned. Part of the strategy behind it is to make the country ungovernable, forcing the government either to negotiate or collapse. But the rebels' dream of seizing power through revolt this year didn't happen; in fact, they didn't even come close.

And fifth, in light of the failure of this insurrectional strategy, rebel leaders are aware that a military victory over an army that is so heavily bankrolled and equipped by the United States is not a viable option.

As in any such process of rethinking, it will take time for a consensus to form in light of these changes. Debate over whether the F.M.L.N. could genuinely support negotiations and a compromise settlement as its ultimate goal remains vibrant. But rather than pitting rebel factions against one another, the split—as far as one exists—is largely between the F.M.L.N.'s leadership and its rank-and-file supporters.

One frequently painted image of the F.M.L.N. is that of a band of zealous ideologues manipulating innocent civilians. But the irony is that, over time, the F.M.L.N.'s peasant base has grown more radical than its leadership. At least 90 percent of the F.M.L.N.'s combatants and civilian supporters are drawn from the ranks of El Salvador's radicalized peasantry. Their participation in a revolutionary movement has been an experiment in empowerment; most have gruesome tales to tell of army repression. Unlike their leaders, who are better attuned to geopolitical realities, these radicalized peasants resist equating revolution with elections and negotiations with "the enemy."

In January, for instance, the F.M.L.N. made the unprecedented offer to participate indirectly in elections (through the left-of-center Democratic Convergence) and to respect their outcome, on condition that the vote be delayed for six months. For the F.M.L.N. leadership, the most difficult exercise was not to persuade its adversaries of its sincerity but to convince its supporters that taking part in elections did not mean selling out the revolution.

The concept of negotiations and power-sharing also raises a number of ideological questions for groups that have grown up within the Marxist tradition. But it is worth noting that the dominant element in the F.M.L.N. today is one of the least ideologically driven of the five rebel groups. The People's Revolutionary Army (E.R.P.), led by Comandante Villalobos, is regularly misidentified as the "most dogmatic

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Marxist-Leninist" rebel organization. But the group was formed in the early 1970s out of the New Left tradition and not, like other member organizations of the F.M.L.N., as a splinter group from the Salvadoran Communist Party.

The E.R.P. can be called radical, even ruthless, in its tactics. The eight mayors assassinated by the F.M.L.N., for example, were all killed in areas under E.R.P. control. Nevertheless, the E.R.P. is politically pragmatic, and the group least constrained by the kind of Marxist orthodoxy that was dominant within the F.M.L.N. as recently as five or six years ago.

Writing in the Spring issue of *Foreign Policy*, Villalobos told his U.S. readers that the F.M.L.N. is committed to a third way of revolutionary democracy. "The Salvadoran revolution is conditioned by the geopolitical realities of Latin America and the United States," he wrote. "The FMLN pursues an El Salvador that is open, flexible, pluralistic, and democratic." Critics may be skeptical, but this position is entirely consistent with the E.R.P.'s own history and the internal evolution of the F.M.L.N. as a whole. Even so, the situation remains fluid, with no single group calling the shots for the F.M.L.N. Smaller rebel units acting independently are widely believed to have been involved in the recent wave of assassinations of high-ranking Salvadoran government officials, actions not authorized by the F.M.L.N. General Command.

How the cards ultimately fall will depend in large part on the response of the U.S.-backed Salvadoran government and army. While there has been considerable pressure on the F.M.L.N. both at home and abroad to re-evaluate its position, there has been no corresponding pressure on its opponents. Rather, El Salvador's newly inaugurated government, led by the Nationalist Republican Alliance (Arena), has shifted the country's political balance markedly to the right. Arena, like nearly everyone else in El Salvador, believes that the U.S.-advocated "low-intensity" approach to the Salvadoran conflict has failed. Arena is right; a change in tactics is bound to occur. The question is whether the government will attempt to end the conflict via negotiations or the all-out military strategy that some army commanders favor.

How one chooses to measure the insurgency is important, and will weigh heavily on the course that the government ultimately decides to pursue. By conventional military standards, the F.M.L.N. may appear to have been weakened. In 1983, for instance, the rebels controlled more than one-third of El Salvador's territory. Operating in large columns of several hundred fighters, the F.M.L.N. was able to overrun key economic and military targets and control many major towns and highways. But a turning point came with the introduction of increased U.S.-supplied air power by the Salvadoran government that year, bolstered by the bipartisan consensus on U.S. policy in El Salvador that crystallized after the election of President José Napoleón Duarte in 1984. The combination of increased air power and decreasing Congressional attention to the question of human rights tilted the balance in the war. Saturation bombing of guerrilla strongholds such as the Guázapa volcano, nearly twenty miles from San Salvador, wrought havoc on the rebels' network of civilian supporters. Helicopter strafing of guerrilla columns inflicted high casualties on rebel fighters.

But the F.M.L.N. adapted accordingly, and by unconventional standards—as a rural-based guerrilla insurgency—it is stronger and more deeply rooted in 1989 than ever before. To avoid presenting an easy target to the government, a normal rebel unit is now made up of only three to eight fighters. Since 1985, these smaller and more mobile guerrilla patrols have concentrated on bleeding the Salvadoran economy and wearing down the army through classic guerrilla tactics such as land mines and ambushes. The F.M.L.N.'s most important change, however, has come in the political arena, especially in the attempt to reorganize and expand its civilian support base. On the slopes of the San Vicente volcano, for instance, the rebels have built organized support among coffee pickers. Growers there, who include El Salvador's newly inaugurated President, Alfredo Cristiani, used to pay their workers about 65 cents (U.S.) for picking twenty-five pounds of beans. They now pay more than $1—the wage demanded by the F.M.L.N. and imposed under threat of reprisals for noncompliance.

For the past three years, the rebels have focused on organizing pickers in areas that produce crops for export, such as San Vicente, Usulután, the San Salvador volcano and the western province of Santa Ana, while the army protects the growers. On the volcano of El Tigre in Usulután, for example, peasants who voted for the Christian Democrat Duarte in 1984 now work diligently making homemade contact bombs for the F.M.L.N.

The F.M.L.N.'s new, stronger and more highly developed civilian infrastructure presents a problem for those who wish to eradicate the rebels militarily. Although the F.M.L.N. may still be far short of taking power, the govern-

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ment is even farther away from its goal of defeating the guerrillas now than it was when hostilities began.

The U.S. approach to the problem has been to continue advocating counterinsurgency techniques similar to those employed in Vietnam—small-unit patrols to root out the rebel fighters, coupled with "hearts and minds" civic action and psychological operations to wean away the rebels' civilian base. But the Salvadoran Army looks all too much like the A.R.V.N. forces in Vietnam. "It's like chasing a mosquito with a hammer," complained one U.S. military adviser. The Salvadoran armed forces have become too dependent on their U.S.-supplied firepower, which they use to defend themselves more than to attack. Motivation is also a problem. Press-ganged into military service, most Salvadoran Army soldiers would rather try to obtain a visa to the United States than fight. And civic action projects? As long as the rebels defend coffee pickers and the army defends coffee growers, no amount of free government handouts will be able to conceal the class-based nature of El Salvador's civil war.

Yet the Arena government, together with hard-line elements in the army, have another plan: an escalation of the counterinsurgency effort to approach something that leading Arena deputy Sigifredo Ochoa, formerly a top field commander, calls "total war." Like many critics of U.S. policy in Vietnam, Ochoa accuses the United States of having "no political will to end the war." He is correct. The Salvadoran insurgency is simply too strong and too well entrenched to be defeated without the violation of human rights on a massive scale. That is a price Arena may be willing to pay, but that U.S. policy-makers may not.

For all intents and purposes, the U.S. military option is dead in El Salvador. And the F.M.L.N. is not about to go away. The country will become more ungovernable the longer the war drags on. Two ways remain to resolve it: negotiations or total war. Although both the United States and the Salvadoran government missed an unprecedented opportunity by refusing the F.M.L.N.'s January peace proposal, the window is still open. But with an Arena government in power it may be closing fast. The United States must choose which path it wishes to pursue. If it does not, the Arena government and the Salvadoran Army will make the choice themselves. □

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NICARAGUA AT 10

Look—We've Come Through

GEORGE BLACK

It was a beat-up Red Cross plane carrying rice and beans that flew me into Managua from San José, Costa Rica, in July 1979, a week after the Sandinistas had taken power. At the immigration office the old Somoza stamps had already been junked, but the new ones, neat mulberry-colored rectangles in the Cuban style, hadn't yet arrived. Instead, what you got in your passport was a crude rubber stamp and, improbably, a poem: *Nicaragua Espera por Vos con la Sonrisa de Lagos, Volcanes, y el Sol Brillante y Dignificante de la Libertad* ("Nicaragua awaits you with the smile of lakes, volcanoes and the brilliant and dignifying sun of freedom"). On the highway from the airport into town, militiamen of 12 and 13 cadged cigarettes and examined passports with grave formality; in middle-class barrios, elderly matrons told war stories about how they had taken supplies to the *muchachos* on the barricades. In the city center, such as it is, the new junta and the Interior Ministry held court on an upper floor of the Intercontinental Hotel. Guerrilla commanders with the mud still on their boots giggled in their exhaustion; they had not a clue what would come next. In the vacuum that only a revolution can bring, all things seemed possible.

But we lived in a different world ten years ago. The 1970s were a decade of revolution in the South, and from Vietnam and Portuguese Africa to Grenada and Iran the tyrants toppled. Today, we are not allowed to speak words like "national liberation" and "socialism" in polite company. It's fair enough to point out, as the *perestroishchiki* do, that no one particularly wants to go back to the bad old days of the invasion of Afghanistan, the time when Leonid Brezhnev was prone to laud the likes of Ethiopia's Haile Mariam Mengistu as a standard-bearer of international peace and fraternity. But the baby has gone out with the bathwater. Even the Russians seem to have bailed out of the Third World, regarding it as an economic sinkhole no longer fit for their consideration as the white man's burden.

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Nicaragua, in its own ramshackle fashion, tried to tread the hardest path of all: that elusive third way, based on local conditions, between satrapy and forced-march socialism. It attempted to do so in the least advantageous spot on the planet—the United States' backyard—and at the least advantageous time, when Washington was reeling from the humiliations of Saigon and Teheran and was panting for revenge. It was an act of the greatest audacity for any small, peripheral economy to try to navigate an independent course between the fierce magnetic pull of the Western economic system and the dubious benefits of junior client status in the Comecon bloc. But many Sandinistas proposed to do nothing less.

In 1979 officials in the new Planning Ministry spoke eloquently of the "diversification of dependency." They described a strategy that was like a three-legged stool: a mixed economy, political pluralism and international nonalignment. The first two parts of that equation were based on the proposition that the Nicaraguan private sector was so weak, so divided by *caudillo* loyalties and localism, that it would be obliged to accept the new rules of the game—economic guarantees without corresponding access to political power. The weakness of the Nicaraguan elite lay deep in its history of dependence on the United States; but that reliance on an imperial *deus ex machina* was also what made them, in the age of Ronald Reagan, such bloody-minded adversaries. Once the *contras* were brought into play, it became virtually impossible not to break the third leg of the Sandinista stool, nonalignment.

Many Sandinistas had feared all along that would inevitably be the case. Part of Nicaragua's tragedy is that it was doomed to fight the ideological and military wars of the 1980s with the weapons it acquired in the 1960s—and that was a decade whose values cut both ways. The Sandinistas, after six years buried away in the mountains, fought their first pitched battle against Somoza's Guardia Nacional at Pancasan in August 1967. In the United States, that was the Summer of Love; Jimi played Monterey. While a New Left sensibility was basic to the Sandinistas' makeup, the 1960s were also a time in which the world was rigidly bipolar. Fidel Castro, swallowing the bitter medicine of *Realpolitik*, backed the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Earlier, Carlos Fonseca, the Sandinistas' founder and leader, had written that he had found the earthly paradise during a pilgrimage to Moscow. Something of that spirit endured: In the spring of 1980, Sandinista officials joyfully returned from Prague and Sofia clutching designs for the posters that would celebrate their first revolutionary May Day—heroic set-pieces of socialist realism, workers in dungarees bending their shoulders to giant cogwheels.

At the same time, in the ranks of the Sandinista movement if not always at its apex, there were the liberation theologians and the Bukharinites, the poets who are Nicaragua's national pride, the Jeffersonians who insisted on seeing the honorable aspects of the U.S. tradition despite all the abuse that the United States had heaped on their country since the days of William Walker more than 130 years ago. For the pundits, the Sandinistas' own contentious sectarian history in the 1970s served as prima facie evidence that inner strife continued, with Leninists supposedly at war with social democrats, Christians with Marxists—the splits tended to have a flavor-of-the-month quality. But these contending impulses often coexisted within a single individual, such as Tomás Borge, who could inscribe the phrase "Sentinel of the People's Happiness" over his Interior Ministry and insist with righteous indignation that this was poetry, not the Orwellian language of the totalitarian state. Again, the Sandinistas had a double misfortune: After 1981, they had to work out their complicated internal polarities under siege conditions, which invariably give precedence to the vertical, the narrow and the bureaucratic; after 1985, they had to do so in the context of a global rethinking in which socialism itself was said to be a dead creed.

The greatest curse that can befall any small nation is to become the litmus test of the power of a larger neighbor. Nicaragua's modest revolution became the prism through which some factions in Washington pursued their revanchist fantasies while others contemplated, in anguished fashion,

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the limits of U.S. morality and power. Nicaragua acted as a kind of petri dish in which others concocted their experiments. The clean-cut missionaries of democracy, the technicians and the fixers trooped into town, just as they always had, to sell the universality of the American Way and fine-tune a new theory that they called "low-intensity conflict." Good-hearted veterans arrived to atone for Vietnam; other men in combat fatigues came seeking a second chance to win it. The Western left, excluded and powerless at home, flocked to the shanties of Managua and the green hills of Matagalpa to lend an altruistic hand and seek inspiration. The acolytes of a thousand revolutionary microsects came to find fodder for their tracts. At times in Managua, as the 1980s wore on, there seemed to be more foreigners than Nicaraguans in the streets.

The United States may not have recovered ownership of its fiefdom, but it has reimposed, through attrition, many of the old economic rules. Blockade, shortages, hyperinflation and the unending search for spare parts and new markets have been Nicaragua's daily lot. When the Sandinistas responded last year with a controversial set of monetary reforms and austerity measures, the faithful were alarmed: Was this a surrender to the crushing logic of the market or just a tactical step toward some better economic model, a local form of socialism? So long as wartime conditions prevail, no one can say.

Where the Nicaraguan revolution goes in its eleventh and subsequent years will be determined by the answer to a question that cannot be postponed: Can the leaders of the United States shed their ingrained reflexes and accept that the cold war is over? The central plot device of John Le Carré's new novel, *The Russia House*, is a piece of military intelligence that scares the wits out of the "gray men" of the U.S. war bureaucracy because it proves that their entire mentality, all their preparedness, is obsolete and unnecessary. There *is* no Soviet threat. The gray men cannot deal with this, for they can conceive of no other way for the world to be than the way they have always known—or imagined—it.

In the 1970s we used to speak of wars of national liberation; in the 1980s the gray men imposed a new euphemism, preferring to call them "regional conflicts." In one region after another of the Third World—in Southeast Asia, Afghanistan, Angola-Namibia, Central America—the Soviet Union appears eager to cut and run, even to leave its bargaining chips unclaimed on the table. And although the Reagan Administration is gone, along with its maddest ideologues and their rationales for involvement in other people's affairs, the talk of their successors is still all of covert lethal aid for the anticommunist crusades of Jonas Savimbi and the *mujahedeen* and Prince Norodom Sihanouk. If the Bush crowd seems paralyzed by bureaucratic inertia and lack of imagination, unable to equate power with any symbols other than automatic weapons and dirty tricks, some on the Democratic side—with Stephen Solarz chief among them—have shown an indecent haste to retool the Reagan doctrine to their own obscure ends. As a result, the United States may end up stuck in a similar place vis-à-vis Nicaragua, even if it gets there by a different and more circuitous path.

The Nicaraguan elections planned for February 1990 will be the best place to measure what capacity, if any, Washington has for "new thinking." The early omens, which suggest that yet another program of "covert" interference is in the works, could hardly be worse. If the Sandinistas' vow to promote political pluralism has failed, one of the main reasons has been the sheer ineptness of their opponents, who were offered a space but had no idea of how to fill it. That's because, a hundred times in Nicaragua's modern history, the paternal interference of the United States has drained the blood from opposition forces and stripped them of their claim to legitimacy. This pathological dependency on outside forces blights Third World elites from Panama to the Philippines, but nowhere is it more extreme than in Nicaragua. Never bother to develop a body of ideas, a social program that would bring respect in the eyes of Nicaraguans—just wait for the agency or the fruit company or the Marines to come in and broker the solution. "We Nicaraguans are accustomed to designate the State Department as arbiter of our fights and differences," said José María Moncada, a *caudillo* of an earlier era; and there has been no shortage of Chamorros and Robelos and Caleros ready to parrot that sentiment.

It's just possible that the experience of these ten years, and the collapse of the *contras*, have taught the Nicaraguan opposition something. It may yet unite around a single candidate (Violeta de Chamorro, widow of *La Prensa* editor Pedro Joaquín Chamorro, is the talk of those in Washington who dream of a Cory Aquino scenario). It may come to see U.S. aid as counterproductive; it may even accept a San-

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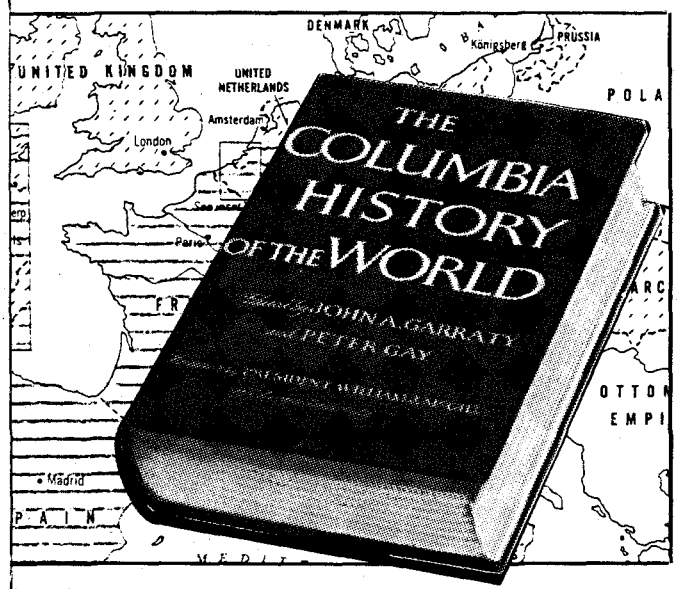

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dinista victory at the polls. But for now, the Sandinistas can make the same claim they did ten years ago: that they are still the only coherent expression of Nicaragua's identity as an independent nation.

Given the brutalizing distortions of war, it would be patronizing and absurd to hail Nicaragua for the quality of the society it has built in these ten years; sheer survival is really the only criterion for judging what has been achieved. As the Sandinistas mark their tenth anniversary in power, they should be saluted for their steadfast refusal to cry uncle. But this is also a time to mourn, not for what was but, more poignantly, for what might have been. From the first days of Reaganism, the Sandinistas had a pretty good idea of what lay in store. "Nicaragua may be swept away and destroyed, its fields turned to salt and ashes," Agriculture Minister Jaime Wheelock told a group of us defiantly in January 1981, a week into the new U.S. Administration, "but it will never be conquered." So much has been lost—the thousands of lives above all, needlessly stolen by old men in Washington every bit as blinkered and cruel as those in Beijing, but also the tantalizing sense of possibilities, the break from old models that seemed at hand in the fierce euphoria of those *compas* at the airport, in another July, a decade ago. □

Green God

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

Tammany and Daley, our general does.

To their credit, our rulers don't often bore us with tortured rationalizations or theological nit-picking. They don't have to. Since we have no political parties and no opposition media, there is always a semblance of "consensus" for these wars. Congress funds the Pentagon, which then responds to the national security state's directives to overthrow an Arbenz here or a Sihanouk there or—why not?—devastate a neutral country like Laos to show how tall we can stand in all our marvelously incredible credibility. Voices of dissent are either blacked out or marginalized, while known apostates of the national religion are either demonized or trivialized. Meanwhile, no one has noticed that the national security state, in its zeal to bring the national religion to all nations, has now deprived us of our original holy text—our Old Testament—the Constitution.

Every war that we have fought since 1945 has been by executive (or National Security Council) order. Since only Congress may declare war, these wars have all been in violation of the Constitution. To the House of Representatives was assigned, uniquely, the power of the purse. But, in thrall to those religious wars that we forever fight, our debts are now so great that Congress dares not prepare a proper budget. So the power of the purse has been replaced by a ridiculous formula, involving a blind arbitrary cutting of the budget should Federal waste exceed a certain arbitrary figure. Although the most militant of our national religionists enjoy calling themselves conservatives, they have not managed to conserve either the letter or the spirit of the Old Testament.

For some time knowledgeable foreigners have found it difficult to talk about much of anything to Americans because we appear to know so little about much of anything. History of any kind is a closed book to us. Geography is no longer taught in most public schools. Foreign languages make everyone's head ache—anyway, *they* all know English. As for politics, that's simple: It's either *us* (what the silver-tongued felon Spiro Agnew, or his wordsmith William Safire, so memorably dubbed "the greatest nation in the country") or *them*—foreigners who envy us our vast choice of detergents, our freedom to repeat as loudly as we want the national prayers, our alabaster cities to which, we tell ourselves, they can't wait to emigrate. On the other hand, the average American, when it comes to his own welfare, is very shrewd indeed. He knows that we are in an economic decline and that our quality of life, though better than that of Russia (all that really matters, our priests hum softly) is noticeably lousy. But the reasons for our decline are never made clear because the corporate ownership of the country has absolute control of the populist pulpit—"the media"—as well as of the schoolroom.

David Hume's celebrated 1758 *Of the First Principles of Government* has never been more to the point than now:

> Nothing appears more surprising to those, who consider human affairs with a philosophical eye than the easiness with which the many are governed by the few, and the implicit submission with which men resign their own sentiments and passions to those of their rulers. When we inquire by what means this wonder is effected, we shall find that, as Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. It is, therefore, on opinion only that government is founded, and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments as well as to the most free and most popular.

The corporate grip on opinion in the United States is one of the wonders of the Western world. No First World country has ever managed to eliminate so entirely from its media all objectivity—much less dissent. Of course, it is possible for any citizen with time to spare, and a canny eye, to work out what is actually going on, but for the many there is no time, and the network news is the only news even though it may not be news at all but only a series of flashing fictions intended, like the avowed commercials, to keep docile huddled masses, keep avid for products addled consumers.

I seldom watch television. But when I do set out to twirl the dial, it is usually on Sunday, when our corporate rulers address us from their cathode pulpit. Seedy Washington journalists, sharp-eyed government officials who could not dispose of a brand-new car in Spokane, think-tank employees, etiolated from too long residence 'neath flat rocks, and always, always, Henry Kissinger, whose destruction of so many Asians and their once-charming real estate won him a prize for peace from the ironists of outer Europe. The level

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of the chat on those programs is about as low as it is possible to get without actually serving the viewers gin. The opinion expressed ranges from conservative to reactionary to joyous neofascist. There is even, in William Safire, an uncloseted anti-Gentile.

I was once placed between two waxworks on a program where one of the pair was solemnly identified as a "liberal"; appropriately, he seemed to have been dead for some time, while the conservative had all the vivacity of someone on speed. For half an hour it is the custom of this duo to "crossfire" clichés of the sort that would have got them laughed out of the Golden Branch Debating Society at Exeter. On air, I identified the conservative as a liberal and vice versa. The conservative fell into the trap. "No, no!" he hyperventilated. "I'm the conservative!" (What on earth they think these two words mean no one will ever know.) It was the liberal who got the point; from beyond, as it were, the tomb he moaned, "He's putting us on."

I have been involved in television since the early 1950s, when it ceased to be a novelty and became the principal agent for the simultaneous marketing of consumer goods and of national security state opinion. Although I thought I knew quite a bit about the ins and outs of the medium, I now know a lot more, thanks to Ben H. Bagdikian's *The Media Monopoly* ("second edition completely updated & expanded") and *Manufacturing Consent*, a study of "the political economy of the mass media," by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky. These two studies demonstrate exactly how the few manipulate opinion. To begin with: The average American household keeps the set throbbing seven hours a day. This means the average American has watched 350,000 commercials by age 17. Since most opinion is now controlled by twenty-nine corporations—due to be at least one fewer if Time-Warner or Paramount-Time or, most chilling of all, Nation-Time comes to pass, one can then identify those twenty-nine C.E.O.s as a sort of politburo or college of cardinals, in strict charge of what the people should and should not know. They also select the Presidents and the Congresses or, to be precise, they determine what the politicians may talk about at election time—that famed agenda that never includes the interesting detail that, in peacetime, more than two-thirds of the Federal revenue goes to war [see Vidal, "How to Take Back Our Country," *The Nation*, June 4, 1988]. Although AIDS *can* be discussed as a means of hitting out at unpopular minorities, the true epidemic can never be discussed: the fact that every fourth American now alive will die of cancer. This catastrophe is well kept from the public by the tobacco companies, the nuclear power companies (with their bungled waste disposal) and other industries that poison the earth so that corporate America may enjoy the freedom to make money without the slightest accountability to those they are killing.

The invention of the talk show on television was, at first, a most promising development. Admittedly, no one very radical would ever be allowed on, but a fair range of opinion could be heard, particularly as the Vietnam War began to go bad. On the original *Today* show, Hugh Downs and I would talk off and on for an hour as news, weather, commercials floated lazily by. But Hazel Bishop, an obscure lipstick company, changed all that. The firm began running commercials not linked to specific programs and it was soon determined that the thirty-second commercial duplicates exactly the attention span of the average viewer. Therefore, no in-depth interview can last for more than seven minutes; three minutes is considered optimum. Recently, I found myself confronting the amiable Pat Sajak. I was all set to do what I think of as my inventing-the-wheel-in-seven-minutes (why what's wrong is wrong and what to do) when my energy level crashed. I did say that if you wanted to know what the ownership of the country wants you to know, tune in to *Nightline* and listen to Ted Koppel and his guests. The effect of this bit of information must have been surreal. Since no voices other than those of the national consensus are heard, how could a viewer know that there are any other viewpoints? I was made aware of the iron rules in 1968, when William F. Buckley Jr. and I had our first live chat on ABC at the Republican Convention in Miami Beach. I was billed as the conservative; he as the pro-crypto—or was it the other way around? Anyway, were were hired to play the opinion game in order to divert the audience from the issues. Buckley Junior's idea of a truly deep in-depth political discussion is precisely that of corporate America's. First, the Democrat must say that the election of a Republican will lead to a depression. Then the Republican will joyously say, Ahhahhhhh, but the Democrats always lead us into war! After a few minutes of this, *my* attention span snapped. I said that there was no difference at all between the two parties because the same corporations paid for both, usually with taxpayers' money, tithed, as it were, from the

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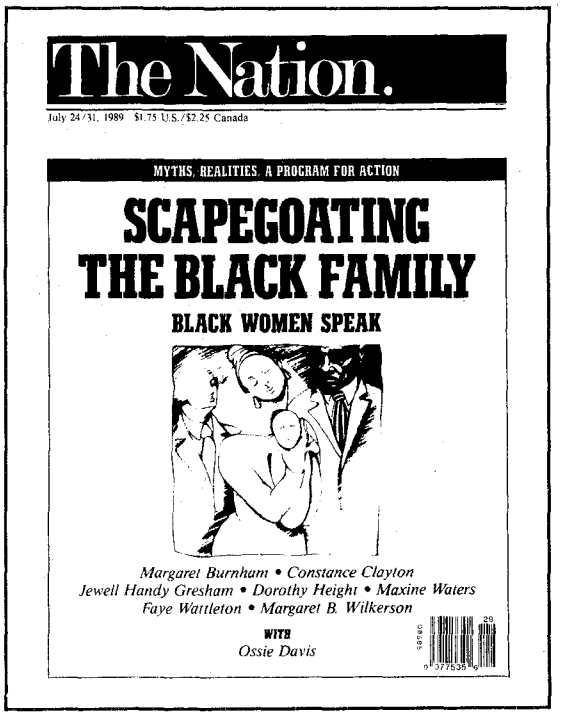
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faithful and then given to "defense," which in turn passes it on to those candidates who will defend the faith. With that bit of news for the national audience I revealed myself not only as an apostate to the national religion; I came close to revealing what I really am: a dedicated anti-anticommunist, a category far more vile to the true believer than a mere Communist. Although my encounters with Buckley Junior got ABC its highest ratings, I was seen no more at election time. Last year, Peter Jennings proposed to ABC that, for old times' sake, it might be a good idea to have me on. "No," he was told, "He'll just be outrageous."

In 1972 the future Supreme Court Justice Lewis Powell wrote the U.S. Chamber of Commerce proposing that they "buy the top academic reputations in the country to add credibility to corporate studies and give business a stronger voice on the campuses." One wonders, Stronger than what? But the advice was taken. Also, as corollary, keep off prime-time television those who do not support corporate America. During the 1960s and early 1970s I used, once a year, to do a "state of the union" analysis on David Susskind's non-network, non-prime-time television program. Many people watched. In the summer before the 1976 presidential election, Susskind wanted to produce a series of one-hour interviews with the twenty or so leading candidates of the two parties. For one hour I would question each candidate about politics, history, economics—whatever came up. Since I favored no candidate and neither party, I could not be said to be partisan. PBS agreed that this sort of program was precisely why PBS had been founded and funded. All the candidates, save President Ford, affected delight. As we prepared for the first program, the head of PBS affiliate WNET, Jay Iselin, canceled the series without explanation. Then the intrepid producer, Hillard Elkins, took over. He had "a good relationship" with Home Box Office, which was "hungry for product." HBO manifested delight in having its hunger so cheaply sated. Then, just before the first taping, Andrew Heiskell, the overall capo of Time-Life-HBO, canceled us. In due course, I was advised that it was not in the national (that is, corporate) interest for so many *expensive* presidential candidates to be questioned by me in a—what was the phrase?—"nonstructured format." Now, of course, with the megacorporate ownership of the media becoming more and more concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, structure is total, indeed totalitarian, and the candidates can no longer be discerned through the heavy blizzard of thirty-second spots.

Currently, the principal dispenser of the national religion is Ted Koppel, a very smooth bishop indeed. Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting—noble, doomed enterprise—had a study made of just who appeared as Koppel's guests during a forty-month period from 1985 to 1988. White male establishment types predominated. Henry Kissinger (Koppel's guru and a longtime cardinal in the national security state's curia) and Alexander Haig (by his own admission, in one of many moments of confusion at the White House, "a vicar") each appeared fourteen times, the maximum for any guest. Yet the cardinal's views on almost any subject are already

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known to anyone who might be interested in looking at *Nightline*, while Haig's opinions have never interested anybody in the course of a long busy career climbing ladders so that he could be close to those with power in order—to be close to them. The next two champ guests, weighing in at twelve appearances each, were the mendacious Elliott Abrams (Koppel assumes that although Abrams will lie to Congress, he won't lie to Koppel) and Jerry Falwell, a certified voice of God whose dolorous appearance suggests a deep, almost personal grief that the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution are not yet repealed. Most of the other guests are hired guns for the national security state.

The Koppel explanation for this bizarre repertory company is that, well, they are the folks who are running the country and so that's why they're on. Well, yes, Ted, that *is* why they're on, but there are other more interesting and more learned—even disinterested—voices in the land and, in theory, they should be heard, too. But theory is not practice in bravery's home. Of semidissenters, only Jesse Jackson and Studs Terkel have been honored with solo interviews with the bishop, who insists, by the way, that the guest face not him but a camera in another room, preferably in another city, with an earphone but no monitor. Good television one-upmanship.

To my amazement, just before Mikhail Gorbachev spoke at the United Nations, on December 7, 1988, I was asked to contribute a tiny prerecorded (and thus easily edited) cameo. I suppose that I was asked because I had attended Gorbachev's famous antinuclear forum in Moscow two years earlier. I spoke to a camera. I predicted, accurately, that Gorbachev would say that Russia was unilaterally disarming, and that we were now dangerously close to peace. To the question What will the United States do without The Enemy?—a pretty daring question from those whose livelihood depends on the demonizing of Russia and Communism—I said that, thanks to television, a new demon can be quickly installed. Currently, the Arabs are being thoroughly demonized by the Israel lobby while the Japanese are being, somewhat more nervously, demonized by elements of the corporate state. But neither will do as a long-term devil because the Arabs are too numerous (and have too much oil) while the Japanese will simply order us to stop it; should we disobey them, they will buy the networks and show us many hours of the soothing tea ceremony. I suggested that the new devil will be the threat to our ecosphere, and the new world god, Green. None of this was used, of course, but a man who writes Russians-Are-Coming thrillers was shown, frowning with intense anguish at, What, *what!* does it all mean? Because you godda be real careful with these guys. Fine show, Ted.

The unloved American empire is now drifting into history on a sea of red ink, as I predicted in these pages on January 11, 1986 ["Requiem for the American Empire"], to the fury of the few and the bewilderment of the many. Thanks to money wasted in support of the national religion, our quality of life is dire, and although our political institutions work smoothly for the few, the many hate them; hence

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A Reflection on the Brutal Turn in China and an Appeal for Clemency

World public opinion that expresses horror at the Beijing massacre, the executions, the subsequent distortion of these events, and the onset of general repression is not an interference in China's internal affairs. It is in fact an effort to demand that the Chinese leadership pay attention to the democratic guarantees present in the Constitution of China. Our mourning is not only for the deaths and destruction to China's honorable place in the family of nations but for recognition once again that constitutions are often not worth the paper they are written on.

Popular movements draw provocateurs and extremists with their own agenda and some good people act rashly. No doubt the protest leaders made errors as the confrontation with authority dragged on. But these are subordinate realities.

The valiant students who demonstrated, in hope and devotion, for greater attention to Constitutional rights were not counterrevolutionaries. They and the workers, journalists and other intellectuals who supported them were seeking redress of real grievances, and the cures they cried out for were in accord with the inner logic of the reforms initiated by the Deng Xiaoping leadership a decade ago. The greater economic openness could only lead to a justified, inevitable demand for similar openness in the political, social, educational, cultural and psychological realms.

The murderous crackdown reveals in sharp clarity the emptiness of the claims of Chinese authority to espousal of socialist democracy.

We strongly urge the Chinese regime to rethink its determination to offer "not one iota of forgiveness" to the leaders of the democracy movement. Clemency is **not** only merciful but essential if China is to demonstrate that the appalling evils of these past weeks are not to remain the guidelines for the future. This is the first essential step, but of course it cannot be the last.

●

New York Chapter, US–China Peoples Friendship Association, 306 West 38th Street #603, New York, NY 10018.

The placement of this message was decided at a special meeting of the chapter on June 26. The chapter was organized in August 1971 and has worked as best it could for friendship with the Chinese people ever since.

the necessity of every corporate candidate for President to run against the government, which is, of course, the corporate state—good fun. In due course, something on the order of the ethnic rebellions in the Soviet Union or even of the people's uprising in China will take place here. Too few have ripped off too many for too long. Opinion can no longer disguise the contradiction at the heart of conservative-corporate opinion. The corporate few are free to do what they will to customers and environment while the many are losing their freedoms at a rapid rate. The Supreme Court, the holy office of the national religion, in upholding the principle of preventive detention, got rid of due process two years ago, and now the Court is busily working its way through the Bill of Rights, producing, as it goes, a series of bright, crackling autos-da-fé, among them not only the hectic flag but children and mental defectives.

Significantly, our prison population is now among the world's largest. Certainly, it is right up there, per capita, with the Soviet Union and the Republic of South Africa. Now the few are proposing that if the war budget is to be, tragically, reduced, the army camps—perfect symbolism—can be used to house our criminal population, particularly weak-fibered drug users. Thus do the few now declare open war on the many, as millions of citizens are now liable to mandatory blood, urine and lie-detector tests, while an electronic bracelet has been invented that will make it possible to track its wearer wherever he goes. Theoretically, half a nation can now monitor the movements of the other half. Better we enslave ourselves, the priests chant, than *they* do.

Lately, the language of government, always revealing, grows more and more fierce and commanding (due to so many wars lost? so much money wasted?), and military metaphors abound as czars lead all-out wars on drugs. Yet, at the risk of causing both offense and embarrassment among even the not-so-faithful, I feel obliged to say that I do not accept the authority of any state—much less one founded as was ours upon the free fulfillment of each citizen—to forbid me, or anyone, the use of drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, sex with a consenting partner or, if one is a woman, the right to an abortion. I take these rights to be absolute and should the few persist in their efforts to dominate the private lives of the many, I recommend force as a means of changing their minds.

Meanwhile, let us hope that opinion will respond to recent events. For instance, despite millions of dollars spent in the last presidential election on trying—successfully—to obscure every political issue while demonstrating—unsuccessfully—that there was a dramatic difference between Dukakis and Bush, 50 percent of the American electorate refused to vote. When a majority boycotts a political system, its days are numbered. The many are now ready for a change. The few are demoralized. Fortunately, the Messiah is at hand: the Green God. Everyone on earth now worships him. Soon there will be a worldwide Green movement, and the establishment of a worldwide state, which the few will take over, thus enslaving us all while forgetting to save the planet. That is the worst-case scenario. The best? Let the many create a *new* few. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Abortion: The Usable Past

LAURA FLANDERS

The majority decision in *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, written by Justice Harry Blackmun, included an expansive account of the history of abortion in the United States. The majority decision in *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*, however, made little reference to the historical record, perhaps because it had just been demonstrated to the Court that it was on shaky ground. In the oral argument held in April, Frank Sussman, one of the attorneys representing the abortion clinics, summoned history to the witness stand as he took on Justice Antonin Scalia. Backing Sussman up was an amicus brief in defense of *Roe v. Wade* filed by more than 400 historians.

"Historians are actors in the debate whether we like it or not," argued Alice Kessler-Harris of Temple University, one of the signatories to the brief. "So we should be conscious actors." Another signer, Judith Walkowitz, a professor of history at Rutgers University, is president of the Berkshire Conference of Women Historians and former chair of the Women Historians' Committee of the American Historical Association. "It was incumbent on us to correct the historical record," she explained, "to provide ammunition for state and local lawmakers in ensuing local battles, and to help shape public opinion." As Walkowitz saw it, the historians had a chance to "reshape public meanings attached to abortion and its traditions—to try to repair the damage of fifteen years of conservative propaganda."

The historians' document was part of a campaign coordinated by the American Civil Liberties Union and the Planned Parenthood Federation that ultimately generated a mountain of briefs hoping to sway the Court in the Missouri case. "Part of the purpose was to demonstrate to the Court that our history and tradition is not one either of deep concern for the moral status of the fetus or of relentless opposition to abortion," according to Sylvia Law, a professor at New York University Law School, a veteran of all the major Supreme Court abortion battles since 1973 and one of those who drafted the historians' brief. Above all, it was intended to reveal the longevity of the dispute: "To show that the issue is not and never has been settled."

Linda Kerber of the University of Iowa, a member of the executive board of the Organization of American Historians, who also participated in the writing, tried to imagine what the Justices could be expected to understand. "I thought, 'Poor them.' The last history they were taught was in the 1940s and 1950s. If a doctor said that treatment of heart disease had changed over forty years, the Supreme Court would believe it. We just wanted them to give us that respect."

The Justice Department made its own appeal to tradition, citing the book *Abortion in America*, by James Mohr, to buttress the claim that the history of both legislation and belief on the subject supports the prohibition of abortion. That was the only historical work the government mentioned. Ironically, Mohr, a professor of history at the University of Maryland and one of the country's preeminent scholars on abortion, signed the pro-choice brief. The Justice Department, the pro-choice brief notes, "misapprehends both Mohr's work and the historical record."

The historians make the case that abortion has been widely tolerated for much of U.S. history and widely practiced for all of it. Where abortion has been prohibited it was on social and economic grounds, not on the basis of concern for the rights of the fetus. That did not emerge as a primary factor in the discourse until recently, the historians argue.

In colonial New England, they explain, while the criminal law condemned adultery, incest, insubordination by children and even "living alone not subject to the governance of family life," it did not forbid abortion. The practice was rarely condemned in court or in surviving religious records, and at the time of the framing of the U.S. Constitution, herbal abortifacients were featured in Culpeper's *The English Physician* (1799), a popular medical manual. The authors of the Ninth Amendment's guarantee that one person's rights should not detract from another's did not think that the amendment applied to abortion.

It was the falling birth rate among middle-class whites, a changing economy and the stratification of class and gender roles in the nineteenth century that inspired the gradual movement toward restriction of abortion. Citing an exhaustive list of published works on the subject, the historians describe the sporadic adoption of antiabortion statutes by various states after 1820.

Beginning with laws banning "poisons" and noxious abortifacients, the early antiabortion acts were framed in terms of protecting women's health. But after the formation of the American Medical Association in 1847, the debate focused increasingly on who was allowed to practice medicine and who was not. Acknowledging that some physicians had qualms about abortion, Law and the others contend that the doctors' main concern was to drive midwives out of business and corner the female health-care market. "No group of physicians was more insecure than the gynecology/obstetrics specialists [of the mid-nineteenth century]," wrote Law, quoting Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America.* Male physicians, Smith-Rosenberg notes, had little to offer. They did not even decipher the female ovulation cycle until the 1920s. These historians see the early push to limit abortion as an effort to exclude "irregular" medical practitioners (primarily female) and to solidify a new, shaky professional male authority.

Nineteenth-century antiabortion propaganda from the A.M.A. focused on the character of the willfully aborting bourgeois woman. To raise passions further, doctors evoked the specter of race suicide. As the Great Plains were opening up, the leading midcentury antiabortion campaigner demanded, "Shall they be filled with our children or by those of aliens?" The brief, quoting Mohr, explains, "Protestants' fears about not keeping up with the reproductive rates of Catholic immigrants played a greater role in the drive for anti-abortion laws in nineteenth century America than Catholic opposition to abortion did."

The "silently screaming" fetus is clearly a modern metaphor. Religious support for the physicians' campaign was never strong. The Pope did not come out for fetal rights until 1869, and even then

Laura Flanders, a freelance writer living in New York City, is co-producer of WBAI Radio's show Undercurrents.

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he condemned abortion only after "ensoulment," which supposedly occurred after forty days' gestation for male fetuses, and eighty for females. Between 1880 and 1920 the majority of physicians preferred to perform a craniotomy (the mutilation of the fetal head) than a Caesarean section when the life of the mother was at stake.

The signatures on this amicus brief, many those of eminent mainstream scholars, signal a coming of age for the historians who have entered the field since the 1960s. It is also evidence of a coalition that has been building recently between the "new historians" and social-policy makers.

Four years ago, two feminist historians were set against each other in the harshly fought Sears Roebuck discrimination case [see "Women's History on Trial," *The Nation*, Sept. 7, 1985]. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission called Kessler-Harris and Sears retained Rosalind Rosenberg, a professor of history at Barnard College, as opposing expert witnesses. At that point, recalls Kessler-Harris, a debate in the field of women's history exploded into the public arena. "For historians, Sears was a terrible example of getting involved in a political fray," she remembers. "But it also enabled us to see how important our work is."

Long before *Webster* hit the headlines, the "new historians"—feminist social historians who attended graduate school in the 1960s and 1970s—were considering how best to mobilize themselves as an intellectual resource for activists. With help from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, Kessler-Harris and others planned a conference to examine the public-policy repercussions of the new women's history. It was this network that Law tapped when the threat to *Roe v. Wade* became clear. The Women's History and Public Policy Conference, held at Sarah Lawrence College in June, brought together feminist historians, lawyers and social-policy planners from around the country. Law urged the audience to consider the meeting as a "prequel" to prepare strategies for a struggle for abortion rights, "not under the umbrella of Supreme Court–protected rights but in state legislatures and in the streets."

Much discussion at the conference focused on issues of race and class. The historians recognized that their brief was significantly weak on the subject of the reproductive experience of women of color. An examination of sterilization abuse in the nonwhite population could have strengthened the pro-choice argument. For example, in Puerto Rico during the period between the 1940s and 1973, while abortion was strictly prohibited, sterilization rates were sky-high. Forced sterilization is a frequent part of the denial of reproductive choice for women of color.

Nor did the brief address the complicated relationship of the nineteenth-century women's movement to the antiabortion campaign. More often than not, the feminists of the period were ambivalent about issues of sexuality. "White feminists were not the heroes of the abortion story," declared Walkowitz, whose own work relates to the "social purity" movement as it affected prostitutes. That could have been a valuable lesson for the 1980s, when women marched en masse for "women's lives" only when abortion itself—not the public funding that made

AFTER RILKE

You, God, my next-door neighbor, how many times
Whole nights I knocked and knocked to wake you.
Yet rarely do I hear you so much as breathe;
Then guess: you're by yourself in the livingroom.
Yet, if you needed something, no one's there—
You know, to pour a glass of wine for you to taste.
One servant waits, at least. Just make a sign.
I'm right here, a step away.

For no real reason a single panel, paper-thin,
Stands between us. One word from you, though,
(Or even from me) and that wood,
Ah, breaks through—
Soundlessly, with no crash or cry.

Alfred Corn

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huge fees in hard currency for directing opera productions in Germany while working with his highly talented Moscow troupe. The results, however, have been spotty. Liubimov has brought back into the repertory repressed plays including *Boris Godunov*, *Alive* and *House on the Embankment*. The eternal moral-political dilemma of Boris rings clean and true, but Liubimov's old ending—in which an actor asks the audience "Why are you silent?"—now sounds flat and inappropriate. *Alive*, in spite of the brilliant stage design by David Borovsky, is more a piece of the cultural past than living theater. *The House on the Embankment*, Liubimov's adaptation of Yury Trifonov's prose masterpiece, is also less at home in the Gorbachev era than it was in Brezhnev's. There are plans to resurrect Bulgakov's *Theatrical Nobel*, but the fast pace of *glasnost* suggests it too will address history rather than current issues.

Liubimov's dilemma—how to keep theater interesting in a post-Aesopian society—is shared by most of the leading Moscow directors. One telling sign is that entertainment has started to become a value. Sex, music and laughter are already very much present in the major theaters and the studios which have sprung up like mushrooms; there are also hints that pornography, rock excesses and sitcom humor are not far behind. As the underground man cavorts in the nude, however, there is hope for a different, more positive synthesis. The young composer Alexey Rybnikov, while waiting for Joseph Papp's Public Theater to stage his *Junon and Avos*, has written a new rock musical integrating Symbolist verse with the religious philosophy of the theologian Mikhail Florinsky. □

EXCHANGE.

(*Continued From Page 154*)

but not in this field. Merle Fainsod, of course, was a major scholar; but he wrote of "millions of victims," not tens or hundreds of thousands. Cockburn has here been misled by the fact that Jerry Hough rewrote Fainsod's *How Russia Is Governed* as *How the Soviet Union Is Ruled*, and changed this and other points while keeping the name of Fainsod (no longer alive to complain) on the cover—a scandal familiar to everyone with any but a superficial knowledge of the subject. Lorimer's work in 1946 was a magnificent compilation, but his estimate was based in part on figures now admitted to be false, and was anyhow overtaken by the later Soviet censuses.

As for Brian Silver and Barbara Anderson, they are indeed demographers and trained in computation. Unfortunately, as with all computing, "rubbish in, rubbish out." They worked hard to prove that the Soviet Union did not have the recent infant mortality now admitted in Moscow. And on the Stalinist period their method is to apply to the Soviet Union tables derived from quite different populations, which begs all the questions. But they are chiefly noted as perhaps the last defenders of the authenticity of the faked 1939 census, and are certainly the "Westerners" lately rebuked for this by the Soviet demographer Dr. Toltz, who writes that there are three reasons for rejecting it: First, the census taken two years earlier was suppressed and the Census Board shot for "diminishing the population"; second, Stalin announced the 1939 results before the Census Board had examined the material; and third, deaths in custody were not registered.

But low casualty figures (like Hough's hundreds or tens of thousands) are in any case even more convincingly refuted by the newly discovered mass graves of people shot in the purge period. At Kuropaty, for example, the *lowest* figure given (in *Izvestia*) is 35,000, plus half as many again in areas not yet covered: that is, over 50,000 from a single mass grave in a republic with about one-eighteenth of the Soviet population. And researchers quoted in the Byelorussian press now give at least double these figures, in some cases much more than double. Moreover, five other grave sites have been named in Minsk alone, and others in the Byelorussian provincial capitals. New mass graves are being discovered elsewhere—near Kiev, in Moscow, in Siberia, in the Far East. But Kuropaty alone would hold Hough's type of total!

Cockburn has on his side the inability (deplored by Joseph Brodsky) of many Westerners to credit such numbers: But this has little bearing on their accuracy. I am more concerned to defend Roy Medvedev than myself. But it may add to Cockburn's confusion to learn that my *The Great Terror*, in which I long ago advanced similar figures, is shortly to be serialized in the Soviet literary-political journal *Neva*. Cockburn seems to believe that no one who holds a strong opinion can at the same time be concerned to establish the facts. I can see why he might think this. *Robert Conquest*

COCKBURN REPLIES

Los Angeles

I said in my original column that "any computation that does not soar past 10 million is somehow taken as evidence of being soft on Stalin." Contrary to the instant assumption of hostile parties reading the column, I didn't come down in favor of any particular number myself, although the estimates of Stephen Wheatcroft (and then Anderson and Silver) looked sensible to me. My purpose was to show that many serious scholars regard Roy Medvedev's numbers, endorsed by Robert Conquest, as being on the high or very high side. I also wanted to point out another regulatory function of the very high estimates, which has been to equate Stalin with Hitler, or to say he was worse than Hitler or, with Lenin, somehow responsible for Hitler. Stalin did not plan or seek to accomplish genocide, or select—as the Nazis did—babies to be murdered first, or the ill and weak because they were ill and weak.

Martin Peretz waited a couple of months after my column and then wrote in *The New Republic*, "Cockburn . . . seems to favor 'tens of thousands' as the number of deaths in the purges of 1937 and 1938." I was startled to see this, then recalled that in citing the range of estimates I had quoted the well-known observation in Fainsod and Hough's book that "a figure in the low hundreds of thousands seems much more probable than one in the high hundreds of thousands, and even George Kennan's estimate of 'tens of thousands' is quite conceivable, maybe even probable." To an intellectual crook like Peretz it was the work of a moment to suggest to his readers that this was my position. But then the whole column was vintage Peretz, misrepresenting Hough, calling Fitzpatrick "Fitzgerald" and, as a preliminary, saying that the Palestinians killed at Nahhalin had got what they'd asked for. As this exchange goes to press, Peretz has published letters from Hough and myself, with a wild diatribe bearing every sign of having been based on a briefing by Robert Conquest.

Paul Robeson Jr. had carefully headed his letter "Cockburn's Apologia for Stalinism," which proved the point I was making. He gets things wrong from the word go. I said that *Argumenti i Fakti* had published estimates by Medvedev of the number of Stalin's victims; that Bill Keller had relayed this from Moscow to *The New York Times*, which then printed the news under the headline "Major Soviet Paper Says 20 Million Died As Victims of Stalin"; that as relayed by Keller we had Medvedev counting 40 million people as having a terrible time between 1927 and 1953, with 20 million killed. All of this is true. Conquest, I note, supports the 20 million figure and attributes it directly to Medvedev, so maybe Robeson should take up the matter with him.

Actually, Medvedev's figure, as cited in the U.S. press, went up 4 million in a week. On January 30 *The Christian Science Monitor* ran a piece from Moscow by Paul Quinn-Judge saying Medvedev had told a meeting the week before that 36 million people fell victim to Stalin's repressions between 1927 and 1953. On February 4, Keller was giving the 40 million Medvedev number from *Argu-*

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menti i Fakti. As I said in the headline of my column, "A Million Here, A Million There."

Medvedev does not explain how his estimates for the period were derived from official statistics, and neither does Robeson. Robeson is correct in referring to the difference between the "expected" 1939 Soviet population (191 million) and the reported 1939 population total (170.5 million) as an estimate of a "population deficit" rather than the number of "excess deaths." But, as Anderson and Silver have pointed out to me, this 191 million estimate was not from Lorimer, as Robeson believes, but from Novoselsky and Paevsky, and Lorimer described it as "a gross error"—"based in large part on excessive expectation of natality." Robeson takes Novoselsky and Paevsky's inflated projection of the Soviet population size in 1939 and duly produces an inflated estimate of 10.5 million excess deaths, which he then attributes to Lorimer. Lorimer's own conclusion was clear. After a caveat about the possibility of error, he says on page 136 of his book, which Robeson may consult if he wishes, "Our information does, however, indicate the loss of some 5 million lives during the intercensus period [between 1926 and 1939] above the number of deaths that would normally have been expected." A page later he implies that this 5 million figure was an upper estimate. Robeson's claim that Lorimer's 5 million was his estimate of famine deaths between 1932 and 1933 simply isn't true.

It is true that inflation has been imputed to the 1939 census, both by Western and by Soviet scholars. The question is, How and in what ways? Anderson and Silver tell me there is evidence that it undercounted the population in some age groups, especially young children. They have pointed out also in *Slavic Review* that no Soviet census has ever been thoroughly evaluated for error.

Robeson's letter gets progressively wilder. As we've seen, he screws up Lorimer's assessment by 100 percent, and his reckoning of an expected population increase in the war of 9 million is extremely speculative. Birth rates were down and infant mortality rates were up. Anderson and Silver say the losses in World War II, both civilian and military, could have been higher. Finally Robeson says grandly, "I estimate this figure [the number of additional excess deaths caused by Stalin between January 1, 1939, and March 1953] to be approximately 10 million." How he gets there he doesn't explain, but Stalin certainly simplified things by finishing people off in these nice round numbers. What chaos there would have been if, like my friend Kennett Love, he'd been a fan of the duodecimal system.

Conquest wonders how I fit him and Stephen Cohen together, which is a bit disingenuous. As I wrote, Cohen has quoted Conquest's figure of 20 million excess deaths before 1939 as being "conservative," thereby suppressing far lower counts by respectable scholars. Cohen didn't write in to defend this bit of trickery but instead went about Moscow calling me a Stalinist. In *Moscow News* for March 21 there appeared an interview of Conquest by Cohen's wife, Katrina vanden Heuvel, though "interview" is too innocent a word for what turns out to be a rather comically contrived exchange in which vanden Heuvel prompts Conquest to caricatures of persons in the United States who supposedly maintain that "only a few thousand" were killed, which is obviously an allusion to Silver, Anderson, Hough and anyone daring to controvert Conquest or Cohen.

If vanden Heuvel had been interested in taking advantage of *glasnost* to do more than butter up Conquest, she would have asked him about his background in the British Secret Service creating "black" propaganda, and why he has spent so much time promoting the lies and forgeries of Ukrainian nationalists and Nazis. In her exchange with Conquest, vanden Heuvel asks how he had got involved in Soviet studies. He attributes his interest to a feeling of "profound sympathy" with the peoples of the Soviet Union, which may be true. At the practical level, though, between 1946 and 1956 he worked for the Information Research Department (I.R.D.), formally part of the British Foreign Office but in fact an arm of, and funded by, the Secret Service, concocting and disseminating anticommunist propaganda. The head of the I.R.D. in the 1950s, John Ogilvy Rennie, went on to head the Secret Service. The I.R.D. was closed down in 1976, when Foreign Secretary Anthony Crosland discovered its extreme right-wing activities. Two years later both the I.R.D. and Conquest's role in it became public in stories published in *The Observer*, based on research by Richard Fletcher, and in *The Guardian*, by David Leigh. Conquest confirmed his work in the I.R.D. and admitted to *The Observer* that in the 1960s he had persuaded Max Reinhardt, chairman of Bodley Head, the publishing house, to bring out a Soviet Studies series based on material from the I.R.D., with Conquest listed as author. Reinhardt told *The Observer* that Conquest had come to him with a proposal for eight books and that he had been surprised to discover that three of them were already written. He told Conquest that he would need a tie-in with a U.S. publisher, and Conquest arranged a deal with Praeger, which is known to have published books sponsored by the C.I.A. *The Observer* traced over a hundred titles connected with what it called the I.R.D.'s "exercise in psychological warfare," including work by Conquest.

At the I.R.D. Conquest worked side by side with Ukrainian exiles who had fled west, often because of their Nazi sympathies during the war, and he has maintained ties with Ukrainian nationalism ever since. Now he is out to pasture at yet another right-wing redoubt, the Hoover Institution at Stanford. So, Conquest has spent much of his working life being sponsored by people wanting the world to hear very bad things about the Soviet Union. As one might expect, though not assume, these ties have certainly not fostered in Conquest respect for facts. In *The Village Voice* for January 12, 1988, Jeff Coplon compellingly outlined Conquest's recent Ukrainian links, and interested parties could also look at Douglas Tottle's booklet *Fraud, Famine and Fascism* (Progress, Toronto). Some Ukrainian émigrés, among them Nazi fugitives, have long been keen to prove that there was a Stalin-organized genocide against Ukrainians worse than Hitler's against the Jews. The Ukrainian National Association gave Conquest money for research which satisfactorily endorsed this idea of a Ukrainian "genocide."

Starting in Germany with the Nazis in the 1930s and followed rapidly thereafter by the Hearst press, right-wing propagandists have made forgeries and fake statistics about the Ukrainian famine a veritable industry. In *The Harvest of Sorrow*, Conquest relied on right-wing and spurious accounts, including the use of works of fiction as if they were fact, concoctions by Nazi Ukrainians, the bogus *Black Deeds of the Kremlin* and even the Hearst-published series by "Thomas Walker," famous and admitted forgeries by a former convict.

Conquest's photographic archive bulged with notoriously bogus material, used also in the film *Harvest of Despair*. "This was a true picture we saw," remarked Conquest on PBS after a starving girl's image disappeared from the screen—supposedly an image from 1932-33 but actually one spliced in from the Volga famine of 1922. Conquest was presumably alluding to the overall claims of the film, which are as false as the photos. "It's not the case that the Ukrainian nationalist organizations collaborated with the Germans," Conquest said in the panel discussion after the PBS-screened film. It's a pity vanden Heuvel didn't ask about this statement in her parley with Conquest. Millions of Ukrainians did fight with the Red Army, but the principal Ukrainian nationalist group, the O.U.N., was fascist from the start, and its Bandera wing (at least one of whose publications was cited by Conquest in *The Harvest of Sorrow*) wrote to the German Secret Service in 1941, "Long live greater independent Ukraine without Jews, Poles and Germans. Poles behind the [river] San, Germans to Berlin, Jews to the gallows." The O.U.N.'s Melnyk faction recruited Ukrainians for the Waffen S.S., and Jewish survivors from western Ukraine have said they feared the Bandera militia more than the Gestapo. After the war some members fled to North America and lodged in the Republican Party, where their anti-Semitism was forgivingly described by *The New Republic*'s editorialist (presumably Peretz) as "antique and anemic." Mine enemy's enemy is my friend.

Conquest's letter is just what one would expect: a mash of misrepresentation and

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fake scholarship. First, it is comical that someone supposedly dedicated to pluralism and the spirit of *glasnost* should still try to sell the notion of an "official" Soviet press. Just because *Literaturnaya Gazeta* or *Agitator* or *Nedelya* makes a claim on a number or publishes Conquest doesn't mean that the number is true or Conquest correct. As we see from *Moscow News*, lots of strange things get into the Soviet press these days, and that's just fine. Second, it is amazing how people like Conquest have a much greater respect for Stalin than anyone else has. They seem to think he knew everything, ran everything, and at the end of the day his high command filed away the precise number of victims of famine and purge in a combination safe against ultimate disclosure.

There is no such filing system. There can be no such certainty. Conquest likes to tag some number as "official" if it suits his purpose. During the Khrushchev era the Presidium of the Supreme Court of the Soviet Union found, on the basis of judicial review, that 600,000 people were wrongly convicted in civil and military courts in the Stalin years, excluding the war, and were subsequently imprisoned or executed; as of January 16, 1989, 25,000 have been similarly exonerated in the Andropov and Gorbachev eras. I'm not saying these figures are true, but they are certainly "official," in that Gorbachev endorses them. Conquest tosses in a figure of 13 million-plus kulaks deported, and, again with a great show of scrupulosity, contrasts this with his own figure of "10 to 12 million." In an interview in the indubitably "official" *Pravda* the Soviet historian V.P. Danilov, who has done more research in the archives than Conquest or Cohen or Robeson, said that out of a million peasant farms eliminated in collectivization, 381,000 families were sent to the north, to the Urals, Siberia and Kazakhstan; between 200,000 and 250,000 families sold off or dumped their property and went to the cities or to construction projects; and in the end, after various ordeals, another 400,000 to 450,000 families also migrated from the countryside. Danilov commented on number-inflaters who, without checking their figures, estimated 13 million to 15 million dead, "as though a figure of 'only' 4 or 5 million is not enough to condemn Stalin's violent methods against the peasants." He expressed respect for the work on statistical data by Robert Davis, Wheatcroft, and Anderson and Silver, whom he cited as putting deaths from starvation at 3 million to 4 million.

Conquest makes jokes about demographers but is happy to rely on the demographic computations that suit his purpose. He evidently has not read Anderson and Silver's article in *Population and Development Review*, since what they "worked hard to prove" there was that infant mortality rates for the Soviet Union were at least 22 to 25 percent *higher* than the reported ones, the reverse of what Conquest appears to infer. Anderson and Silver have never defended the 1939 census as completely accurate. Conquest and others like to reject it as completely inaccurate because they can then substitute any number of their choice. Rubbish in, rubbish out, as Conquest would say. Silver tells me that Wheatcroft has seen an official memorandum prepared at the time of the 1937 census that would suggest that the 1939 census was inflated by some 2 million lost souls. A 1939 census inflated by 2 million would be very inconvenient for Conquest, having some 12 million to 15 million people too many in it to support the highest claims about the number of excess deaths in the 1930s.

Because Conquest has just reviled Jerry Hough's estimates, the reader might suppose that Conquest's reference to Kuropaty and Byelorussia should be understood in the context of the great purges. But one can't project the death toll from the Kuropaty mass graves entirely onto the purges because these graves contained not just bodies of people killed between 1936 and 1938 but also from massacres carried on in western Byelorussia after its annexation from Poland, until the Nazi invasion of 1941.

I'm sure Medvedev, who has endured much, will survive Conquest's embraces.

Conquest has a political agenda that is clear (he confided to vanden Heuvel a great admiration for Margaret Thatcher), and his scholarship is rotten. Cohen respectfully quotes those rotten estimates, and calls me a Stalinist. What's Cohen's agenda? What's vanden Heuvel's? I wish I knew. They are the people who have either written or shaped most of *The Nation*'s recent Soviet coverage. In his *Nation* columns Cohen has used the word "we" in discussing U.S. relations with the Soviet Union, this pronoun seemingly embracing everyone from the Secretary of State down. Like many other people he throws around the word "Stalinist" with great abandon. He should reread what that pioneer of Bukharin studies, Sidney Heitman, wrote: "One need only recall Bukharin's role in the defeat of Trotsky, his later treatment of Trotsky's followers, and his unequivocal emphasis throughout the 1920's upon force and coercion as *reserve* measures to be invoked whenever incentives failed to achieve their objectives, to refute assertions of his political 'softness,' as contrasted to Lenin's presumed 'hardness.'"

This brings me to some observations by Jerry Hough, who sent me a letter after my column appeared, which I quote here almost in its entirety.

> The figures keep rising every month, but that doesn't make them right. Soviet authors have no information we have not had. Indeed, the flood of biographical information coming out has been surprising to me for the number of people whom I would have thought were killed immediately but who instead were simply sent to the camps.

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Without any question the quotations to *How the Soviet Union Is Governed* should make it clear that Fainsod was dead and that I am responsible for them. Alas, the statement you quote from me on tens and hundreds of thousands was as badly expressed a sentence as I ever wrote. What I meant was a range of some 75,000–200,000. I still think that is probably about right. But I am quoted very loosely, as if I were referring to arrests, all purge deaths, all deaths, etc. The numbers were not expressed as clearly as they might have been, but it was absolutely clear that I was talking about *deaths* (not arrests) between 1937 and the 1939 census (not deaths in the camps afterwards). Similarly, Fainsod's "millions" was arrests, not deaths.

. . .

What the purge estimates have to be squared with is the distribution of the population and the distribution of the arrests. . . . Everyone says 90 percent of the purge victims were men. Moreover, . . . the great majority were between 35 and 50–55 years of age. If millions died in the purge, the percentage of men between 35 and 50 who were killed, let alone arrested, is very high, regardless of the 1939 census veracity. These figures are impossible unless large numbers of workers and peasants were arrested and killed, but all of the evidence indicates otherwise. The percentage of nonadministrative white collar hit was also relatively low. Fitzpatrick's recent work shows the relatively low percentage of telephone owners in Moscow (a very elite group) who were purged, as well as the happiness of peasants at the purges. The purges were not hitting at peasants but at the rural officials who had been leading the forced collectivization 7–8 years earlier. Solzhenitsyn hardly mentions the purges in his Gulag books, and clearly thinks that the purges hit at Communists who deserved what they got (that is, not that they were guilty of the crimes charged, but had been the oppressors of earlier years). Burlatsky's recent memoirs in *Novy mir* note that his parents—both party officials in the 1920s—became rank-and-file specialists and thus avoided the purges.

Once we go to collectivization and famine deaths, there can be no precise "real" figure. In a pre-penicillin age, no one starved to death. As hunger weakened their resistance, they succumbed to some infection. But in a pre-penicillin day, millions could die in epidemics (even in the U.S. in 1918-19), and the question of who would have died otherwise is impossible to know. Indeed, Lorimer speculated that a major cause of "excess" deaths was the overcrowding of the cities and the ease of the spread of disease.

Let me make two general points. First, I do put the purge deaths 1937–1939 in the 75,000–200,000 range, and I accepted Lorimer for 1926–1929 excess deaths of 4.5–5.0 million [similar to Anderson and Silver's number of adult deaths in that period]. Even if there were more deaths (and they are only estimates), how does the acceptance of my figures constitute a defense of Stalinism? Is Mr. Robeson saying that he considers my figures morally acceptable and that they have to be multiplied many times before we can condemn Stalin? Really? I thought I was calling Stalin a reprehensible murderer when I used them. I was and still am totally mystified why a difference between 5, 10 or 15 million deaths has any moral significance at all.

Second, it seems to me that those who have become obsessed with Stalin and "Stalinism" have something to answer for before the court of history. By talking about "Stalinism," they really—and often quite proudly—are apologists for Lenin. Somehow Lenin has become someone akin to a Swedish Social Democrat, and it is an accident of history that his revolution did not have a benign result. This is the most dangerous nonsense. Lenin was the great extremist of 1917, and it is wrong to think that an extremist revolution is likely to have anything but very extreme and painful consequences for a people. Any fool can condemn a Stalin or a Pol Pot, but romantics who like a Lenin or a Bukharin (a man to the left of Lenin in 1917-18) are legitimating similar—and dangerous—revolutions in the future.

In addition, those who focus only on the crimes of Stalin have missed the dynamics of Soviet history and have had a very negative impact on American foreign policy. The paradox of Stalin was that at the same time he was repressing culture and cultural figures, he was pushing pell-mell an education system for the masses. It is not an apology to notice the latter (the repression was unnecessary for and unrelated to it) and to understand that Stalin was digging the grave for Stalinism. One can perhaps have a little more empathy for the Western fellow travelers of the 1930s, for at a time of depression at least there were real achievements they were seeing, even if they were blind to the crimes. Now 60 percent of Soviet adults have a high school diploma or better, and it should not be a surprise that an educated middle-class should vote for a reformer like Yeltsin. It was those who refused to see the social change that Stalin was producing as he created the Gorbachev generation who said that Soviet society was extremely conservative and that Gorbachev faced massive conservative opposition (when his opposition is on the other side) and who thereby legitimated the do-nothing foreign policy of Reagan and Bush.

There now seems to be only one villain in Soviet history, Stalin; and one hero, Gorbachev. To say anything critical about the latter is denounced as fealty to the former. Medvedev once wrote a rather critical piece about Gorbachev in *New Left Review*. Did that make him a Stalinist? I think some Soviet foreign policy initiatives undertaken in the Gorbachev period have been lamentable, for example the vote in the U.N. Security Council to cut Untag forces in Namibia by more than one-third. Gorbachev's public statements about Nicaragua and the U.S. sphere of influence have been bad. It's not Stalinistic to point that out, any more than it's Stalinistic to say that the Brezhnev era was, "relatively speaking, a golden age for the Soviet working class," a remark I made that was denounced as "obscene" by a Soviet émigré in *The New York Times*. I scarcely thought I was saying anything controversial, since of such a golden age one could ask, Relative to what? I'm very much for *glasnost*, but that should not prevent one from criticizing, say, those Russian economists—plainly ardent followers of Milton Friedman—who made a successful bid for the headlines in Moscow recently by saying that the economy would collapse unless full market relations were introduced without delay. What does *perestroika* hold in store for the Soviet working class? Are we seeing the formation of a yuppie Soviet intellectual elite that has interests very different from those of the Soviet working class? These are reasonable questions, and it doesn't make one a Stalinist to ask them. "Stalinist" now seems to be used as a catchall term of abuse for anyone who has as an ideal a classless society animated by socialist principles, and who does not think that what are chastely called "market forces" are the exclusive signposts to that goal. I would have more basis for calling Conquest and Cohen Nazis because the former uses Nazi propaganda as fact and the latter endorses the consequences of this "scholarship." I don't want to see capitalism restored in the Soviet Union. I don't know what Cohen wants, however many times I look through his old columns. I wish I did. Now as always, it's helpful to know where the "expert" is coming from, as the case of Conquest usefully shows.

Alexander Cockburn

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TECHNOCRACY-TECHNOLOGICAL SOCIAL DESIGN available for $2 from Technocracy Inc., Continental Headquarters, Savannah, OH 44874.

LEFT BUSINESS OBSERVER — a monthly newsletter on economics and politics worldwide. "A salutary antidote to the economic mush in mainstream periodicals." — Alexander Cockburn. One year $18. 3-issue trial $6. Left Business Observer (Dept. N), 250 West 85th Street, New York, NY 10024.

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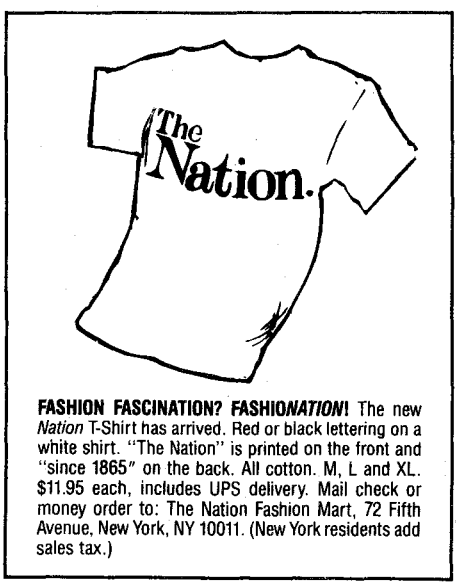

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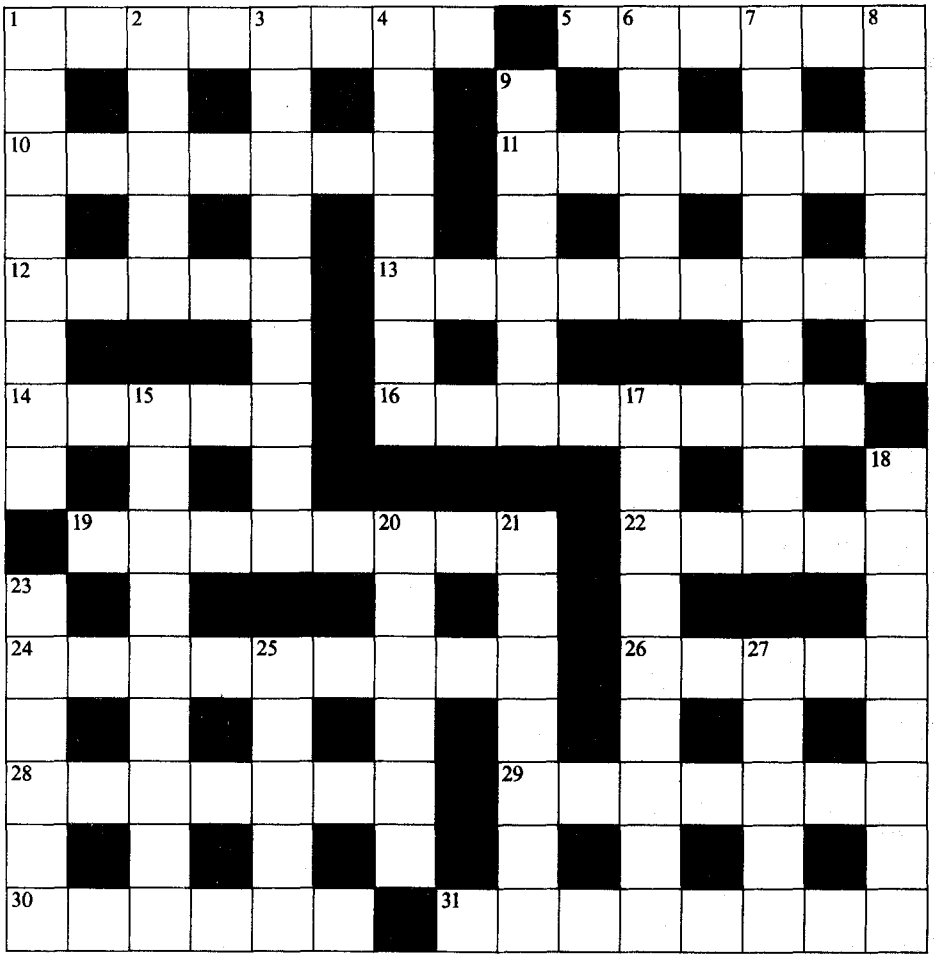
SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2252

D	O	R	I	C	■	G	A	M	E	C	O	C	K	S
I	■	U	■	A	■	A	■	A	■	H	■	A	■	I
S	A	F	A	R	I	S	■	S	T	A	R	R	E	D
A	■	F	■	T	■	B	■	T	■	R	■	R	■	L
B	O	L	D	■	F	A	C	E	D	■	T	Y	P	E
U	■	E	■	R	■	G	■	R	■	A	■	O	■	■
S	I	S	K	I	N	S	■	S	E	M	I	N	A	L
E	■	■	■	D	■	■	■	■	■	B	■	■	■	E
D	A	M	A	G	E	S	■	F	E	E	L	I	N	G
■	■	I	■	E	■	C	■	O	■	R	■	T	■	I
H	A	L	S	■	F	I	E	L	D	■	M	A	R	S
O	■	I	■	C	■	E	■	I	■	T	■	L	■	L
O	R	T	O	L	A	N	■	A	M	E	R	I	C	A
C	■	I	■	I	■	C	■	G	■	R	■	A	■	T
H	E	A	D	P	I	E	C	E	■	M	A	N	S	E

Crossword Puzzle No. 2253

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1, 5 and 30 Money, to certain people, and one who rents out the ram? (If you stay, this is a polite gesture.) (5,3,6,6)
10 The princess has a common hat that looks like a worm. (7)
11 Repast for the horse, especially for breakfast? (7)
12 See 21 down
13 Little devil, alternately what the fiddler plays as a way to make persistent advances. (9)
14 Describing the 30 as a sort of thing that might prove less expensive? (5)
16 The confused aims around it might be associated with the Panama Canal or a bridge to New Jersey. (8)
19 Something to tie things up with nothing on the truck but leather. (8)
22 Slightly over a hundred caught in the act? Quite the opposite, being the prickly type! (5)
24 Brooding here might be the reason for the scary type in the field, according to the sailor's viewpoint. (5-4)
26 The odd trick—if old? (5)
28 Let atoms of this lurk within the bowl, and 3.14 within that. If not universally believed it may be a matter of this. (7)
29 Sounds like the seers of graven image worship. (7)
30 See 1 across
31 Public Relations would make such unpleasant types advance. (8)

DOWN

1 and 23 down Where pirates were trained to attack young students there. (8,6)
2 When nuisances are present, one might see it and suffer it. (5)
3 Happy about the lightning bug run over by the lawn mower? (9)
4 Does such an acquaintance have 2 down? (7)
6 Complete, say. (5)
7 Just another damned thing by Vanderbilt! (3,6)
8 and 18 Liquid containers handed out to the poor, or just diamond experts appearing on occasion? (6,8)
9 Successful move the French made with a pair? (6)
15 Rock may be one's thing! (9)
17 A lousy writer, and a further control to the cowboy, perhaps. (9)
18 See 8 down
20 The girl who starts at 10 gets up after 6 in the city. (6)
21 and 12 across The reason for 2? Not on your life! (7,5)
23 See 1 down
25 The thing that makes life worth living to some may be hot stuff! (5)
27 Stumbles on the right answer for some vacationers? (5)

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

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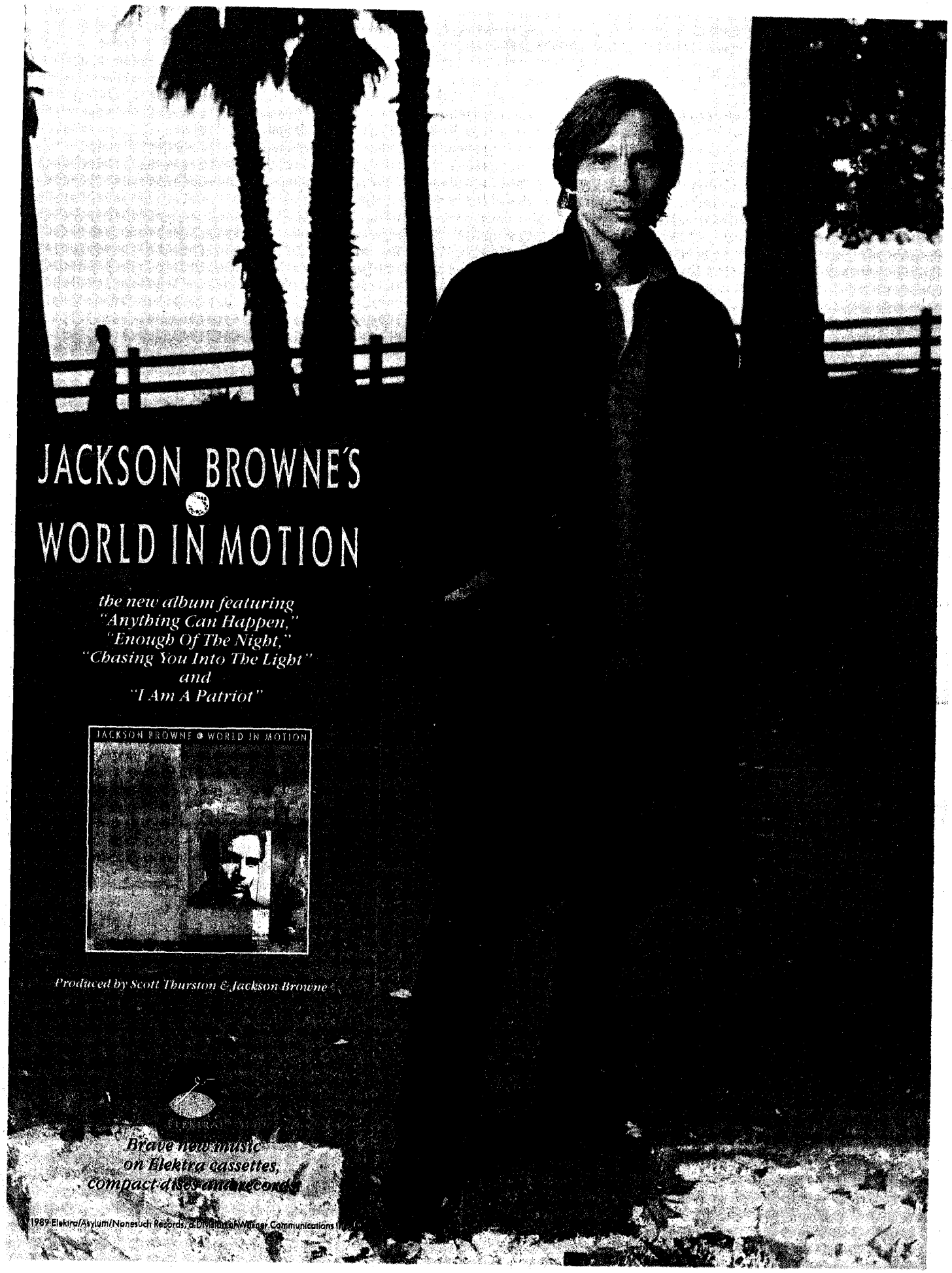
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